

KASTORIA

**Revitalizing the economy of
a Northern Greek city**

by Nikolaos Mizas

Thesis Paper

Master's Degree in International Public Administration
(MIPA)

to be presented to

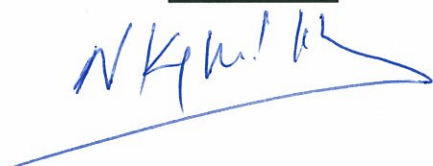
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The author

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'N.K.W.' followed by a flourish, underlined with a long horizontal line.

Date of submission

2/7/2019.

Author's Official Declaration

I, Nikolaos Mizas, author of *Kastoria- Revitalizing the economy, organizing and modernizing a northern Greek city*, hereby proclaim, that this thesis paper was written and developed in accordance with the educational laws and regulations, as defined by the academic community to which I adhere to (The University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki, Greece) as a Master's Degree (MA) candidate in the institute's Department of International and European Studies. All information processed, analyzed and mentioned in this thesis paper, was carefully selected and used in order to strengthen the author's argument. No political motives, personal, economic aspirations or ambitions were used or targeted in the completion of this paper. All information included was obtained through legitimate primary and secondary sources that are outlined and clearly mentioned in the works cited/sources page of this thesis paper and were solely used for the purpose of its completion. All persons mentioned in this thesis paper are true and not factitious. This paper in no way means to promote any one individual, or undermine and politically or ethically target any person, his/her occupation, personal, ideological, political, economic or societal points of view. Much of the information used and analyzed in this thesis paper was based on the author's personal experiences, visual interpretation, understanding and general knowledge of his topic of analysis.

Thesis Paper Abstract

The overall aim and objective of this paper is to serve as a new “starting point” for the city of Kastoria in its attempt to surpass the problems of the past and reemerge as a modern, organized and viable European city in the twenty-first century. It also provides the reader with general and basic information regarding, infrastructure/facilities, transportation, maps/destinations, places/locations of interest, accommodation, contact information within Kastoria and its surrounding suburbs. Based and developed specifically on multiple interviews, in-depth research and analysis of multiple primary and secondary sources, and a personal narrative structured around the author’s first-hand experiences, knowledge and understanding of certain issues relating to the topic, this thesis paper can be used as the focal point for the economic and infrastructural development, regeneration and transformation of the city. Covering numerous areas, aspects and sectors of Kastoria’s everyday life, sections of this thesis paper may be used by the local authorities of the city, so that they may get new ideas that they would consider implementing in future time. This paper may also have a positive effect upon other young Greek citizens from around the country, that in turn, may also want to give something back for the betterment of their own communities.

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I) INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Motivation

My family hails from the region of Kastoria in northwestern Greece and I have always felt a longing in my heart to offer something to my area of heritage. Although a history major in my undergraduate years in John Carroll University (Cleveland, Ohio, USA), the MIPA (Master's in Public Administration) program that I attended during the 2017-2018 academic year, offered at the University of Macedonia (Thessaloniki, Greece), gave me the opportunity to explore multiple new subjects that I had never before dealt with in my life, nor had thought would grasp my interest. As the academic year progressed and I gained significant knowledge in multiple areas having to do with, or related to public administration, I wanted to do something a little different and somewhat “unorthodox” with my thesis paper that possibly had not been attempted before in the program.

My main aim was to write a paper that would and could be used by others in the future constantly. I did not merely want to write something that would sit in the corner of a bookcase and never be glanced at just so I could say “it gave me my degree”. My purpose was to create something that could have a direct, positive impact on society or at least on a portion of it, and could offer people new ideas, a new way of thinking and approaching their everyday societal issues so that they may find appropriate solutions to them.

I would also like to clarify two very important points prior to the development of this thesis paper. Primarily I would like to clearly note that this thesis paper strictly deals with the **city of Kastoria** and what I would define as its “metropolitan area” (surrounding suburbs) and not with issues concerning the entire County of Kastoria or the Prefecture of Western Macedonia. Other towns and villages or, locations of importance in other towns (for example the Aristoteles Airport in Argos Orestiko) are only mentioned in relative importance to the city of Kastoria alone. Secondly, in this thesis paper I did not deal with, or research issues regarding:

- i) alternative forms of energy for Kastoria (natural gas and the TAP pipeline),
- ii) the sewage system of the city
- iii) water and electricity
- iv) the “stray animals” problem within the city
- v) the establishment of a new Cultural Center within city limits
- vi) Lake maintenance and preservation
- vii) Kastoria’s public elementary, junior-high and high schools
- viii) Kastoria- smart city

I am personally planning on addressing, examining and analyzing these issues specifically and individually in the near future.

ii) General Overview

Kastoria is a medium sized city (*Kunzmann 2010*) of approximately twenty-thousand inhabitants (metropolitan area), located in the western part of the Greek region of Macedonia, very close to the borders with Albania. It was first known as “Keletron” or “Kilintron” as mentioned by the Roman historian Titus Livius in the 5th century a.d. (*Drakopoulou 2013*) Built on a small peninsula jutting into lake Orestias, Kastoria's unique natural environment and climate can be rarely seen elsewhere in Greece (*Dermitzakis & Kouli, 2010*). Combined with an incredibly rich historic past, Kastoria is beautiful, intriguing, and captivating. A promising place of business, commerce and economic success since the early Byzantine times and well into the Ottoman period (*Makris 2000*), Kastoria is the “rough diamond” of Greece, a city that has lost much of its past glory and prominence in the modern era. However, it has the potential and capacity to become what it once was, a bustling city of opportunity and economic success.

Kastoria, as with most of Greece, was hit hard by the fiscal crisis of 2009 that crippled and annihilated its one major industry, fur (*Mavridis, Pouliopoulos & Pouliopoulos 2009*). That, together with a series of economic mistakes of the past that can be aimed at multiple directions, had a detrimental effect on Kastoria. Since then the city seems to be turning into a literal “ghost town” as career opportunities are slim, thus causing a good portion of the younger generations to seek jobs elsewhere, either in the main Greek metropolitan cities or abroad (*Karafolas, Alexandrakis 2015*).

The MIPA (Master’s in International Public Administration) program helped me explore areas of education and learning that were unknown to me, however, became extremely useful in the writing of this paper. Having been taught about international economics (with a focus on European economics), international public administration, but also European law making, studies of European governance etc., I was able to use my knowledge and the different “tools” the courses provided me with, in order to assess the “Kastoria issue” in a different, holistic way and synthesize a major initial strategy game-plan for this Greek city. If analyzed and used as a “future portpholio or agenda” by local authorities in the region of Kastoria, this thesis paper can have an efficacious effect on Kastoria; not solely on the city alone, but most importantly on its inhabitants and their everyday quality of life. I decided to “step into the mayor's shoes” and through various trips to Kastoria and abroad, tens of interviews from people who belong to every single facet of Kastoria's society, research of multiple scholarly sources, as well as through my personal knowledge, understanding and appreciation of certain elements of everyday life, (not solely as a scholar, but as a European Greek citizen) I created a detailed analysis of “what is *now*” and “what needs to *be* in the future” and more importantly, repeatedly answered the question in my head, “*If I was mayor or head director what would I do now?*”.

In the numerous chapters of this paper I cover nearly every aspect of Kastoria's everyday life, the major and minor issues the city faces, and some things that need to be

done for it to change. From tourism, to the fur industry, to agriculture, to the athletic facilities, healthcare and education, even road construction and development, I have managed through my interviews, research and personal assessments to find the problems and contemporary issues that Kastoria faces, and offer simplistic, logical ideas that can help the city overcome them.

iii) Methodology and Structural Research

The most important source of information gained for this thesis paper came through the multiple interviews conducted in the city of Kastoria within a period of approximately nine months (August 2018-May 2019). The personal interviews aimed at providing the author with as much first-hand information as possible from individuals living and actively participating within the city of Kastoria in their everyday lives. People from different professional, economic, ideological and political backgrounds helped make the writing of this paper as holistic, but simultaneously as unbiased as possible, taking different parameters under consideration.

Seventeen people were interviewed in total, and the information gained from these interviews was used to either, **a)** strengthen the author's argument on a series of controversial topics/issues regarding a certain element of Kastoria's economic development that he (the author) was possibly not aware of, or not well enough informed about, or **b)** provide additional information where necessary, in order to further expand into a specific area where other secondary source research would simply not qualify as being adequate enough in doing so. This thesis paper analysis relies heavily on the information gained from the personal interviews conducted and could/would not have been able to be completed without them.

However, the interviews were not all entirely successful. On multiple occasions the information that was provided to me was biased to say the least. In some cases, the individuals I interviewed, spoke to me using criteria that was based directly on their personal motives and political ideologies. Through my further research and use of other primary and secondary sources I found out that some things were factitious, so they were either not included in this paper or significantly altered (biased parts subtracted) so as not to create any misconceptions or false premises. I also wish that I had the opportunity to speak with some more people that could have contributed even further to my analysis especially in chapters such as the one regarding the Aristoteles National Airport (Chapter V), the Kastoria Athletic Facilities (Chapter X) and possibly some historians who could have helped me even further analyzing and formulating chapters VI and VII (Doltso & Apozari historic districts/ The Ottoman monuments of Kastoria).

Accordingly, in order to further strengthen the author's understanding of the multiple facets of Kastoria's everyday life dealt with in this thesis paper, numerous other primary and secondary sources were used in the processes of doing so. The author aimed

at using scholarly sources (articles) that directly or indirectly offered additional necessary information in the analysis of his topic, *Kastoria- Revitalizing the economy, of a Northern Greek city*, and tried to narrow them down so as not to overexaggerate their contribution to the synthesis of this paper. All scholarly sources and other references used and mentioned in this thesis paper do not date prior to the year 2000, as the author wanted them to be as relevant to the 2019 analysis of Kastoria he was doing. Web/internet sources were minimally used in this thesis paper as well, only when certain other primary and secondary sources simply did not suffice to the completion and in-depth analysis of certain points of immediate importance.

Sadly, not many primary or secondary sources examine or deal with Kastoria's multiple issues (the ones analyzed in this thesis paper) in depth, especially sources that are relevant to date. It was rather difficult for me to examine some major/key factors analytically as well as some of the issues and problems that Kastoria is facing, due to this lack of sources that I previously mentioned. I therefore had to rely on some papers and/or other documents dealing with other cities in Europe or globally (similar in size, population and geography to Kastoria) and apply them as best as I could to Kastoria itself. This was very time consuming and difficult to be put into effect. For example, in chapter II, *Kastoria- Urban Development and Planning*, there was very little information available regarding Kastoria's road network, as well as littering and vandalism problems. I had to approach these issues by locating information from other Greek cities or towns (and Europe to a greater extent) that face and/or have adequately dealt with similar problems. The same can be said about Chapter X of this thesis paper *Kastoria- Athletic Facilities*, where no matter how much I searched for in the internet or other sources the information was so outdated that I had only one internet/web source to rely on, and had to personally visit these facilities to get a general overview of the condition they were in and compare them to other facilities either in Greece or abroad that I have visited.

The scope of analysis in this thesis paper is rather large and thus did not allow for the even more in-depth approach to certain areas of interest that should and could have been developed differently and analyzed to an even greater extent. For example, I feel that the author made a mistake in dealing with too many different issues of Kastoria rather than a more limited amount for an even more specific interpretation. Eventually, I came to notice that each chapter could be a thesis/research paper in and of its own.

Finally, this thesis paper was put together in such a way in order to ensure that the reader could easily and directly pinpoint/identify the section of his/her interest without necessarily having to read it in its entirety. Twelve different chapters synthesize this paper, each covering a major section of the city of Kastoria. Each major section deals with numerous sub-sections that allow for the even closer monitoring and examination of a smaller issue, or different smaller issues regarding the city.

II) KASTORIA-URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

i)The inner-city and suburban Road Network

In order to make local commute faster, safer and easier for both inhabitants as well as tourists, a city-whether small, medium-sized or large, must have an appropriate road network. The purpose of each and every road network within an urban area is to: **a)** connect various locations within the urban complex (including suburbs), **b)** provide a secure way of reaching a given point of destination and **c)** minimizing time of approximate travel to and from a given point “a” to another point “b” (*Coclite, Garavello & Piccoli 2005*). In this chapter of my thesis paper, I will try to outline some of the major problems that Kastoria, as a city, faces when it comes to its main road networks as well as the current condition many main roads are in. Based on the problems that I will pinpoint; I will accordingly outline numerous simplistic solutions through which Kastoria can achieve the establishment of a safe and modern road network that reaches the average to higher European standards (*Albalate, 2014*). Please note that the following sectional outline of road network issues is not in order of importance. Each one should be dealt with seriously by local municipal or prefectural authorities, who should also aim at providing long-term solutions rather than short-term ones.

-Road-Construction and Improvements

Most Greek cities or towns have paved roads with asphalt, which is a mixture of gravel, sand and asphalt limestone. Asphalt is believed to be one of the best materials used in road pavement, however there are many different types of asphalt that make for different types of road pavement (*Kim 2008*). The same is the case for the Kastoria road network, layers of asphalt have been used over the years to construct or simply cover-up road sections that have been worn-off from increased vehicular usage. The Kastoria road network however, as is the case with most other similar places in Greece, is not regularly and adequately resurfaced, so as to ensure that the upper most layer of asphalt: **a)** is in a good condition so as to be able to handle increased vehicular travel and, **b)** when resurfaced, is resurfaced in such a way so as to ensure that the asphaltic exterior layers remain in good condition over a longer period of time (*Chen, Yang, Lo & Tang, 2002*). Of course, the quality of asphalt used in every case, in coordination with the in-depth road works that take place during the road construction (i.e. Scrapping of old surface, placement of numerous layers of gravel and cement beneath asphalt layer so as to ensure strong future road resistance) play a significant role in the endurance of any given road (*Kim, 2008*).

What happens in many cases in Greece is that, due to a municipality's pressure in time to fix a road problem, together with the attempts of local authorities to surpass expensive road works and settle for what is most affordable, roads are simply covered up

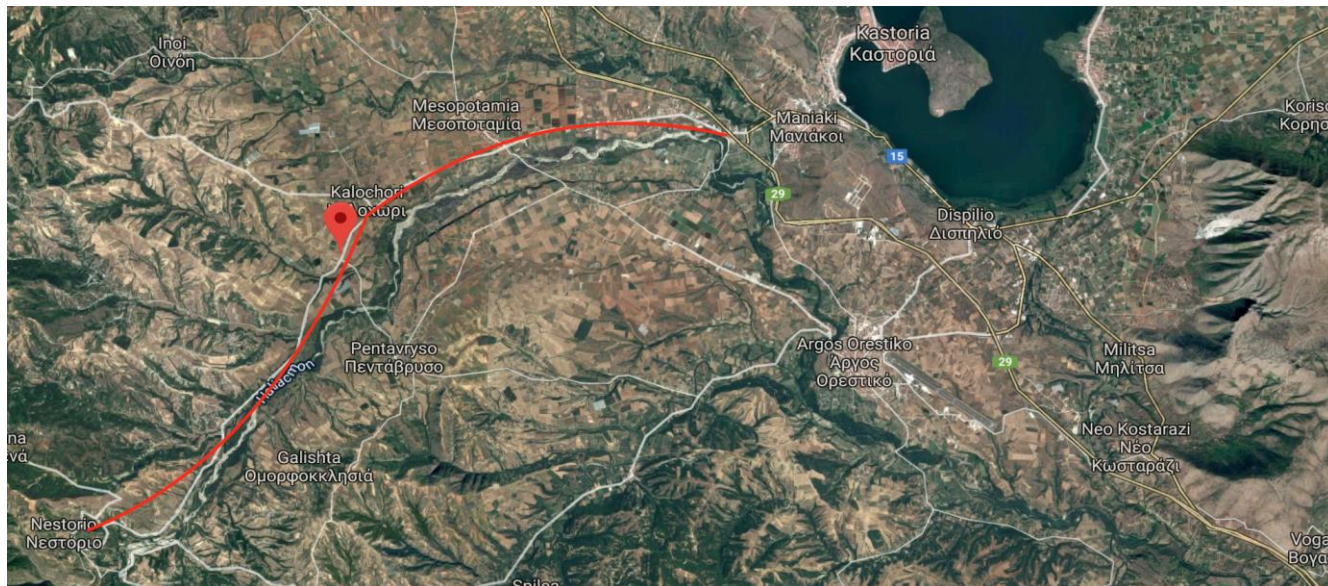
with a thin, weak layer of asphalt without any other works taking place. It is a temporary solution aimed at simply mending the road for a minimal period (*Kontogiannis, Kossiavelou & Marmaras, 2002*). The times I have witnessed such works taking place in Greece are too many to count. Cheaper for the time being, very expensive for the long run. But in Greece, the mentality that exists in many similar situations is: “*do today, forget about tomorrow.*”

Kastoria, is considered to be both in area as well as in population, a medium-sized European city (or town for that matter), with a small road-network consisting of some national roads (connecting the city center to nearby suburbs and villages, minor avenues (like Kiknon Avenue), usually as one enters the city, and of collector roads (like Mitropoleos street for example) that cut through the city center or connect nearby suburban areas to the city center (like Orestion street). The rest of the roads are simple byways and other cul-de-sacs that can be found within the city center and other adjacent neighborhoods serving as access points to residential buildings, municipal buildings, monuments or stores (*Zhong, Sharma & Lingras, 2005*).

Kastoria's urban development, as is the case with most modern Greek cities and towns is chaotic to say the least. Appropriate urban planning was nowhere to be found during the 60s, 70s and 80s which resulted in apartment buildings being built, without adequate parking spaces- apartments over towering narrow roads that would serve as parking for inhabitants as well as access points (*Hatzivasiliou, 2013*). History, in the case of urban development, is not easily undone, therefore it is the obligation of local authorities to **a)** find a way to solve Kastoria's road problems taking under consideration the already existing poor urban development plan of the city and to, **b)** not make the same mistakes in the future.

-National Roads

Kastoria-Nestorio National Road (Επαρχιακή Οδός Καστοριάς-Νεστορίου)



1.1

The Kastoria-Nestorio National Road (Επαρχιακή Οδός Καστοριάς-Νεστορίου; image 1.1 above), is the main road linking the city-center of Kastoria to the western (north-western and south-western) towns and villages of the prefecture. It is the main road also connecting Kastoria to the nearby suburb of Maniaki (Μανιάκοι) directly south west of the city. The road has two lanes going in opposite directions, links up with Idras Street (Οδός Ύγρας) and passes by the military base camp of Drakopoulos (Στρατόπεδο Δρακοπούλου). It also serves as the main access road linking the Kastoria town center with the Technological Institute of Western Macedonia in Kastoria (ΤΕΙ Δυτικής Μακεδόνιας).

Although this national road does not fall under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Kastoria, rather than that of the Prefecture, direct pressure must be placed on the Prefectural Authorities for the road to be repaved as soon as possible. Protective railing must be placed on either side of the street and lighting as well as road signage must be improved. Garbage and trash should be collected on a monthly basis as well.

Kastoria-Grevena National Road (Επαρχιακή Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών)



1.2

The Kastoria-Grevena National Road (Επαρχιακή Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών; image 1.2 above), is the main road linking Kastoria to its southern suburb of Dispilio (Δησπιλιό) as well as to the nearby town of Argos Orestiko. Multiple large hotels, as well as fur exhibition centers are located on either side of this two-lane road, and it is the main entry point of the city of Kastoria from the Egnatia Highway. This road needs to be repaved as soon as possible. Signage and lighting are not adequate, and the speed limit is rarely obeyed by the drivers. Seeing that this is the main entry road to Kastoria it must always be in impeccable condition ensuring visitors as well as local citizens a safe, well-maintained access point to the city. Again, since this road is not directly under the jurisdiction of the municipal authorities, constant pressure must be placed on the prefecture to ensure that this road is updated, constantly monitored and that it fulfils all modern safety standards. It is the first road that tourists will see, either via their arrival from the Argos Orestiko airport, or by car from the Egnatia Highway.

-Avenues

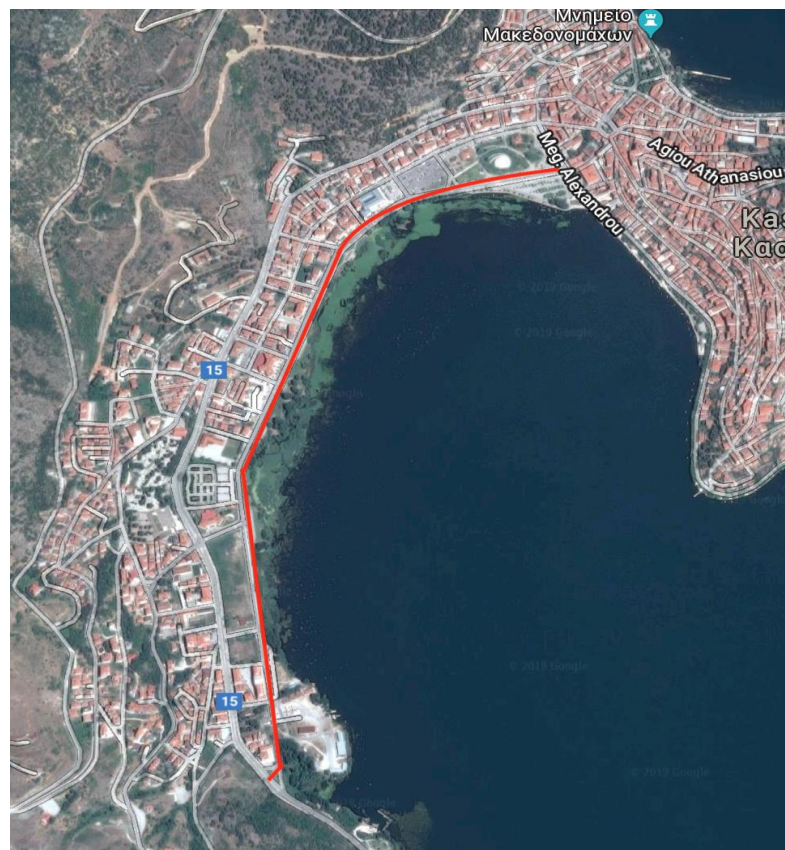
Kastoria's main avenues (**Kiknon Avenue** and **Grammou Avenue**), the two main access and exit points of the city center, towards Maniaki suburb as well as Dispilio, should always be in excellent condition. There is no and should be no exception. These two avenues should be perfectly repaved in their entirety every five to ten years (depending on their condition and the success of works during the pavement period) and should constantly be checked and updated for issues like potholes that could prove to be threats to drivers (Kim, 2008). The roads should have clear, clean, vandalism-ridden road signage, including over-head signage, and all avenues should always be monitored by

electronic surveillance systems, to ensure for the safety of the drivers. Lanes and turning lanes should always be clearly marked, and road lighting should be evident and clearly functional every fifty to one-hundred meters of each avenue's length. Preferably, (due to Greek driver's tendency to disobey the driving laws), orange-markings can be placed in the middle of the avenues (where there is no clear dividing sidewalk or dividing strip), to make sure that drivers do not surpass other vehicles by entering in opposing lanes. Another solution would be to establish protective railing on either side of each avenue and along the middle, as a diving line for traffic going in both directions.

Vehicular parking should only be allowed on one side of the avenues, and the municipality should ensure that parking locations (where parking is acceptable and will not cause further traffic issues) should be clearly marked on the pavement, with the additional road signage next to the parking space. Parking should not be allowed indefinitely and should be monitored either through closed surveillance systems along the avenues or by the municipal police/ traffic police patrol.

1.3

→ **Kiknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων)**- Kastoria's main vehicular entry point to this city center (see image 1.3) from the Kastoria-Grevena National Highway (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών). It runs directly parallel to the lake on the one side, and Grammu Avenue (Λεωφόρος Γράμμου) on the other. It features two lanes heading north towards the city center and south towards the suburb of Dispilio (Δισπηλιό) divided by a large road divider that ends at the traffic light intersection of Kiknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων) with Megalou Alexandrou Street (Οδός Μεγάλου Αλεξάνδρου). In the winter of 2019, the municipal authorities updated the avenue's



road markings (lanes, crosswalks, arrows indicating traffic direction etc.) which were very important as the old road markings were completely worn off (Angelis, 2018). Lighting is adequate and clearly illuminates the avenue during night hours. The same can be said about road signs, they are clearly visible while driving along the avenue. On the one side

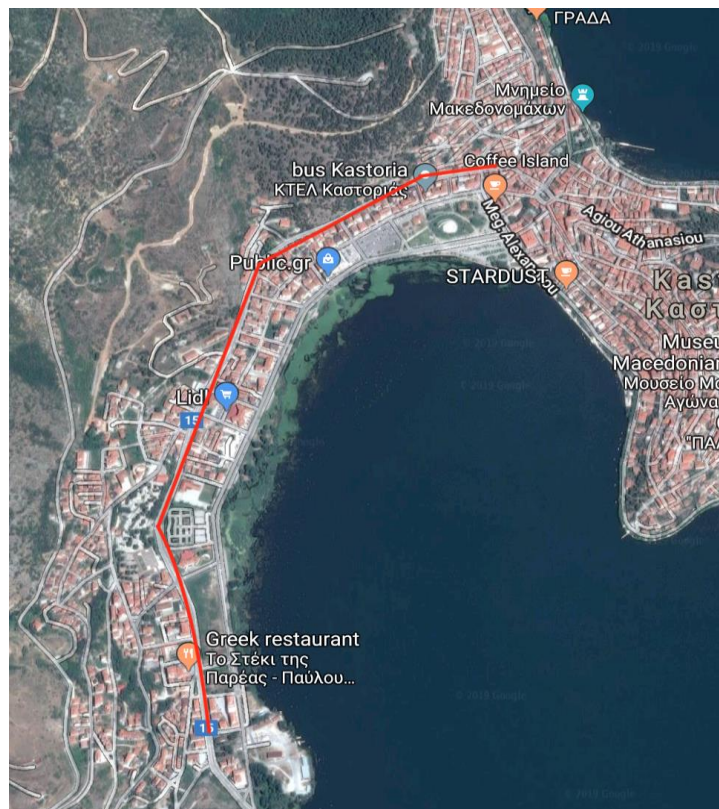
of the avenue (facing the lake) a large pedestrian walkway has been created so that citizens and visitors

can enjoy a walk along the lake's shore. Multiple of the city's major businesses (stores, supermarkets, restaurants) are located along Kiknon Avenue, in the direction heading south towards Dispilio. It is unquestionably a very important road of the city.

The only major problem that I would like to pinpoint in relation to Kiknon Avenue is the parking problem. As one enters the city, many cars are found parked on either side of the avenue making it difficult for drivers to maneuver as entire lanes are completely taken over by parked cars (especially close to the Kastoria Mall, the situation can get very hectic). The Kastoria Indoor Mall (Εμπορικό Κέντρο Καστοριάς) offers a large parking area for its customers adjacent to it, however sometimes the spaces are not enough, causing cars to park along the avenue. I call for the creation of either: **a)** another parking lot near the Mall's location that can also serve as parking to other stores and businesses , **b)** the creation of designated parking spaces along Kiknon Avenue, or **c)** the creation of some indented parking spaces within the pedestrian walkway along the Avenue heading north towards the city center on the side of the lake). I also suggest that traffic or municipal police constantly maintain a visual monitoring of the illegally parked cars along Kiknon Avenue so that all four lanes, in both directions are always clear for incoming and outgoing traffic.

1.4

→**Grammou Avenue (Λεωφόρος Γράμμου)**- A main, two-way road, it is the busiest street in Kastoria today (see image 1.4). It is in the heart of the city center and runs parallel to Kiknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων). It starts at the entrance of the city (as one enters from the Kastoria-Grevena National Highway, basically from the road connecting Kastoria to Dispilio) and runs all the way through to the intersection of I. Metaxa Street, Megalou Alexandrou Street, Grammou Avenue and November 11th Street). Multiple gas stations, stores, supermarkets, banks and other areas of interest are located along the road. However, driving across it can be rather dangerous and uncomfortable to say the least. Cars are parked left and right making it rather impossible to drive

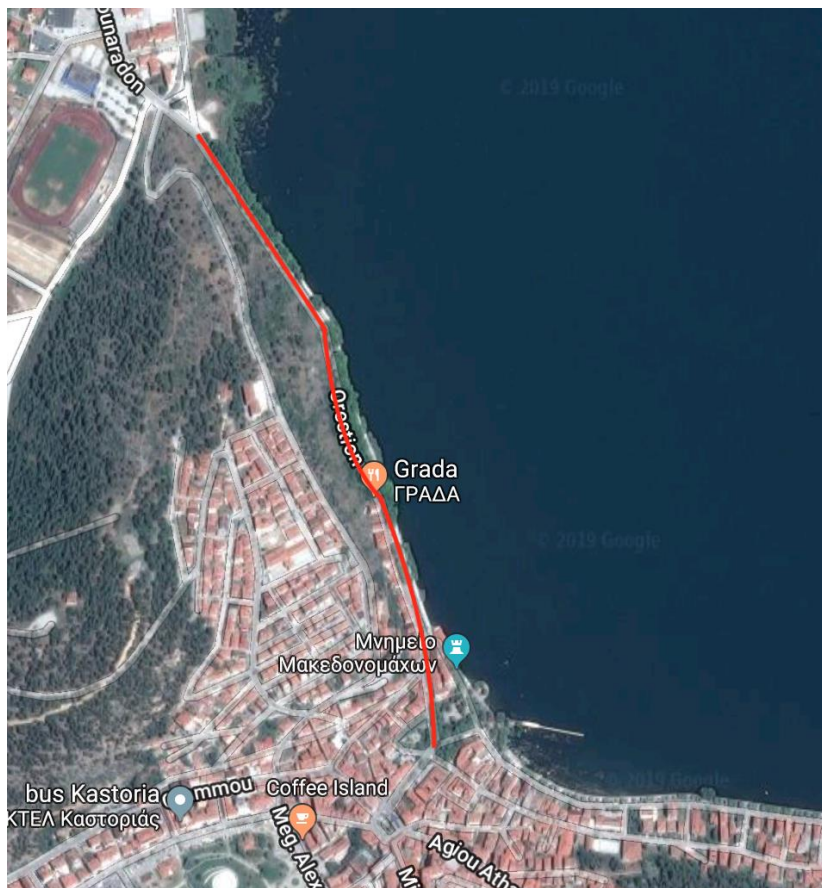


along the road without making an illegal overtaking. Sidewalks are not always evident along this main street, so in many occasions, one must walk in the busy street to avoid cars that have been parked on sidewalks, or on crosswalks.

It is mandatory that the municipal authorities take charge and strictly prohibit illegal parking on either side of this street. Municipal authorities in cooperation with the provincial traffic police, can designate certain parking areas along the road, for limited time, and constantly observe the ongoing traffic and parking using either: **a)** an electronic monitoring system or, **b)** by designating hourly patrols of either traffic or municipal police to monitor illegal parking. Sidewalks must be enlarged (**especially** at the intersection of I. Metaxa Street, Megalou Alexandrou Street, Grammou Avenue and November 11th Street) to make it easier for citizens and tourists alike to easily walk to their destination without the fear of getting run over. Crosswalks should be established with clear, weather-resistant markings, and appropriate signage as well as lighting should be placed on either direction of this main traffic artery.

-Collector Roads

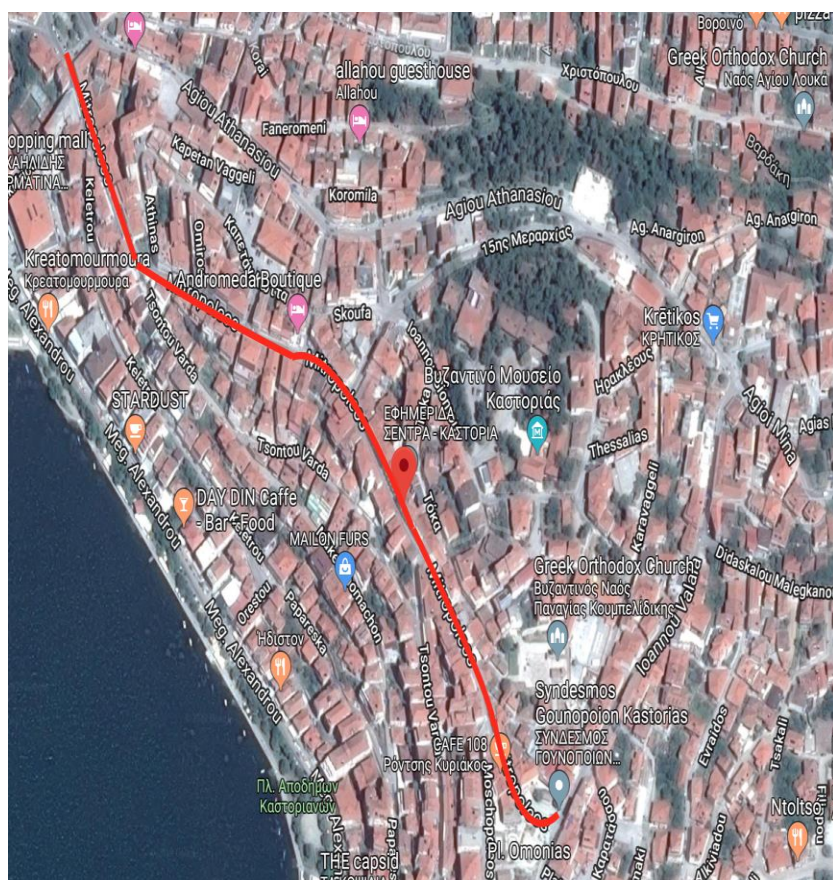
1.5



→ **Orestion Street (Οδός Ορεστίων)**- Which eventually branches into Kopilaton street and Gounaradon Avenue (see image 1.5), connects the city of Kastoria (northern shore/ Βόρεια Παραλία) to its northern suburb of Hloi, should have clear phosphorescent road signage along the way, should be illuminated up until the entrance to Hloi. Towards the side of the lake, municipal authorities most definitely need to either, place protective railing, or orange-markings that can be seen by drivers during the night hours, and can give them a clear indication of how close they are either to the lake itself or to the sycamore trees that form a dividing line between lake and road along

Orestion road. I personally believe that it would be wise to place a traffic-light at the junction formed at the end of Orestion road at the formation of Kopilaton and Gounaradon, just as one enters Hloi.

1.6



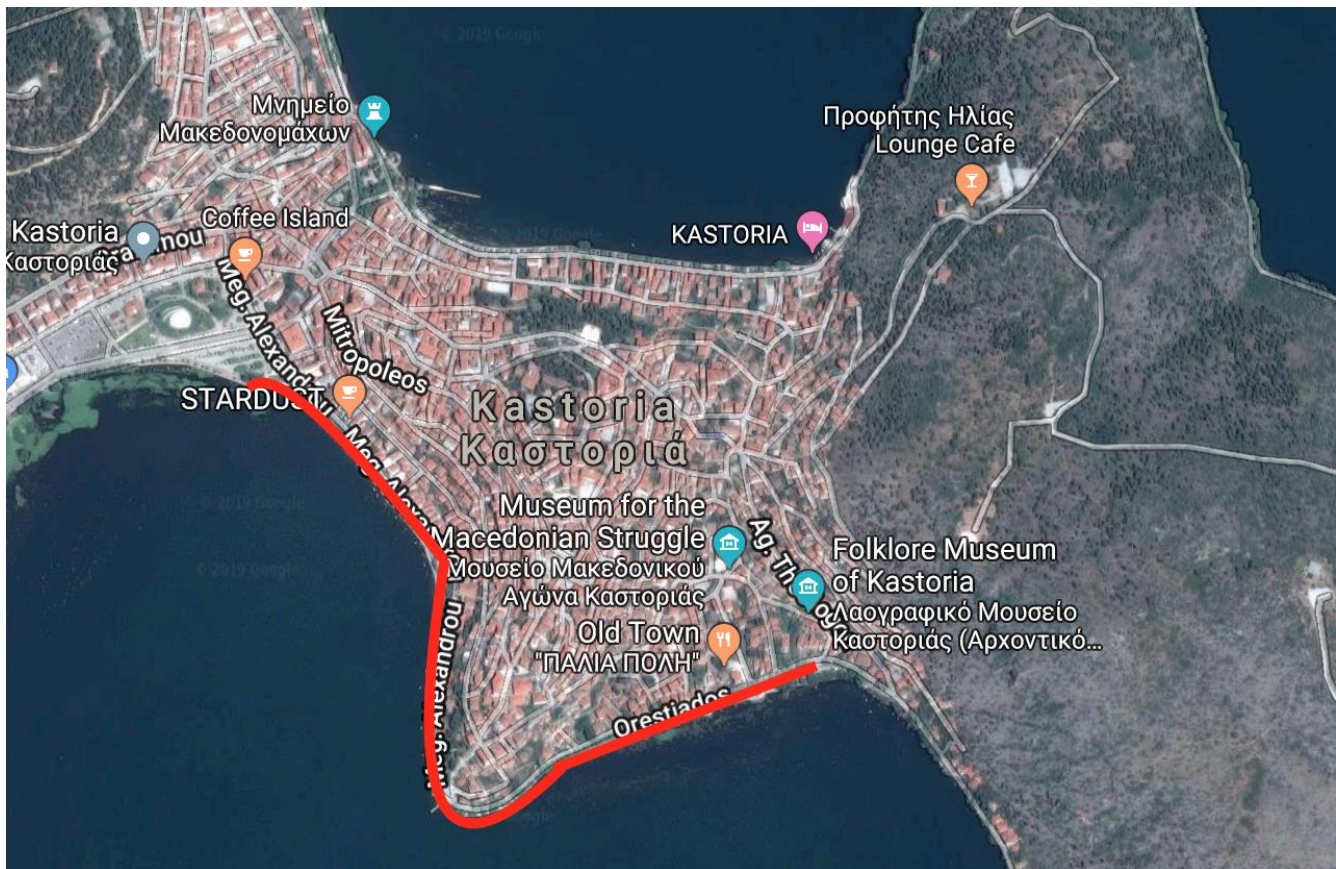
Μητροπόλεως)- The main shopping road of Kastoria (see image 1.6). A long, one-way, up-hill road that approximately starts from Platia Davaki (Πλατεία Δαβάκη) and ends at Platia Omonias (Πλατεία Ομόνοιας) once the prize jewel of the city, with beautiful storefronts, cafes and restaurants, can now be compared to a “ghost-town” street. Most of the stores have been closed (I have personally counted around forty-fifty stores that are currently for rent along this once main shopping strip), while those that remain are struggling financially to sustain themselves (*Angelis 2018*).

The municipality must act quickly in order to: **a)** salvage the existing stores so that Mitropoleos road is not completely abandoned in the near future, **b)** help convince potential store-owners to open up new stores on this shopping-strip and finally **c)** rejuvenate the economy of the area. I feel that via a strong promotion of Mitropoleos road as the main shopping-strip of Kastoria, tourists shall be inclined to visit it. Luckily enough, on Mitropoleos road one cannot only find stores and cafes/bars but very interesting historic monuments as well, such as the **Byzantine Church of Taxiarchis** built in the 9th c. A.D. (Βυζαντινός Ναός Ταξιάρχη Γυμνασίου) and the two important squares of Davaki (Δαβάκη) and Omonia (Ομόνοια). A tourist will be inclined to visit these locations upon arrival at Kastoria, and thus, will also could shop at the local stores on the way up or down. For this to be achieved, Mitropoleos Road must be promoted as a main tourist attraction, and the municipality must take **direct** and **immediate action** against **illegal parking** on the street, that makes one's climb and descend basically impossible and extremely dangerous. The sidewalks on either side of the road must be upgraded and possibly even enlarged, to ensure that the citizen or the tourist can easily access the shops and safely reach his/her destination point.

-Main Lakeside Roads

I would like to place immediate emphasis on the main lakeside roads of the so-called “northern” and “southern” shores of the lake (βόρεια/νότια παραλία). These roads form a ring that continues around the peninsula, making it possible for someone to drive from the northern shoreline to the southern shoreline, and vice versa, without the need of having to cut through the city center. Their importance therefore is huge as they do not simply serve as access points to these locations but provide for the city’s most scenic and famous drives.

→Southern Shoreline (Νότια Παραλία)



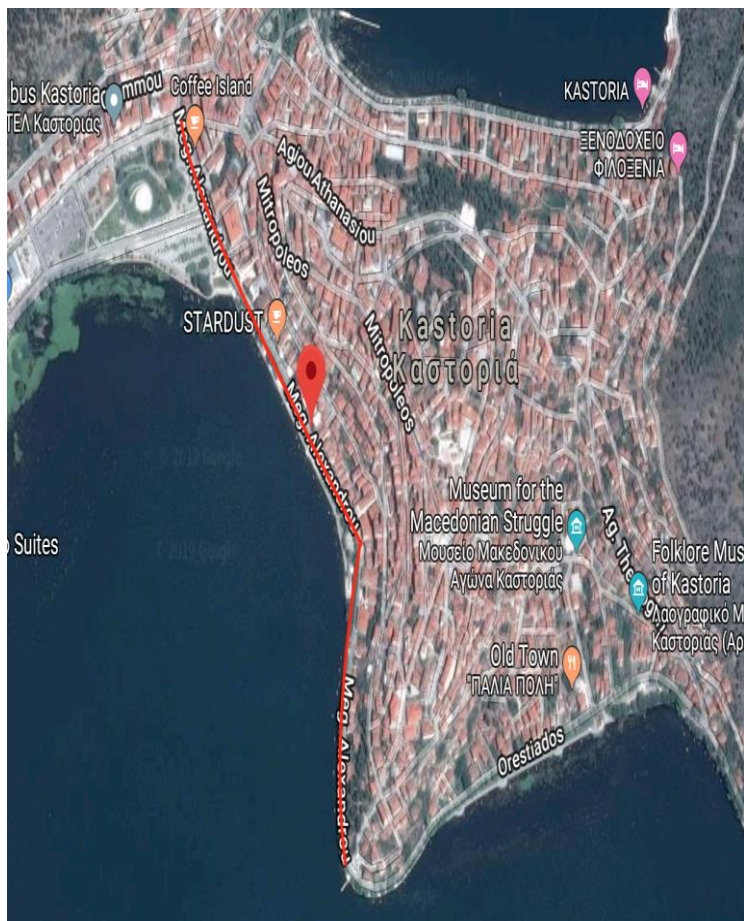
1.7

On the southern shore the main road that encircles the lake (see image 1.7), Megalou Alexandrou Street (Οδός Μεγάλου Αλεξάνδρου) which eventually, after a bend that leads directly to the Doltso District turns into Orestiadou Street (Οδός Ορεστιάδος), and further down into Mavriotisis Street (Οδός Μαυριωτίσσης) is one of the busiest roads in the city, especially during the night hours and the weekends when traffic is heavier. It is also the road eventually leads to the Hospital and, after an approximately two-kilometer drive, to

the Mavriotissa Monastery, which is located on the tip of the peninsula that jets into Orestias lake. The street is quite large and has two lanes in opposing directions. As one passes by the Doltso District, Orestiadou street turns into Mavriotisis street. The road becomes narrow and eventually right after the hospital, turns into a one-way street. Based on the analysis provided above I would like to deal with each one of the three sections of this street separately.

→Megalou Alexandrou Street (Οδός Μεγάλου Αλεξάνδρου)

1.8



The initial section of the southern shore's ring road (see image 1.8) is lined by multiple cafes, restaurants and bars, and for the most part deals with most of the traffic on nights and weekends. Many Kastorians believe the southern shore of the lake to be the “hot spot” for a weekend outing and therefore, on certain days of the week, especially on weekends traffic congestion can be common. On the one side of the road are the cafes, bars and restaurants, on the other a large walkway designed for those who wish to park their cars in the large parking lot across from the Prefecture building (Κτίριο Περιφέρειας) and walk to their destination of interest instead of drive there, and park on the road. Sadly, a large part of the walkway has been overcrowded by tables and chairs from restaurants and bars, so that they

may offer their customers the ability to either sit and enjoy a meal inside or outside by the lake.

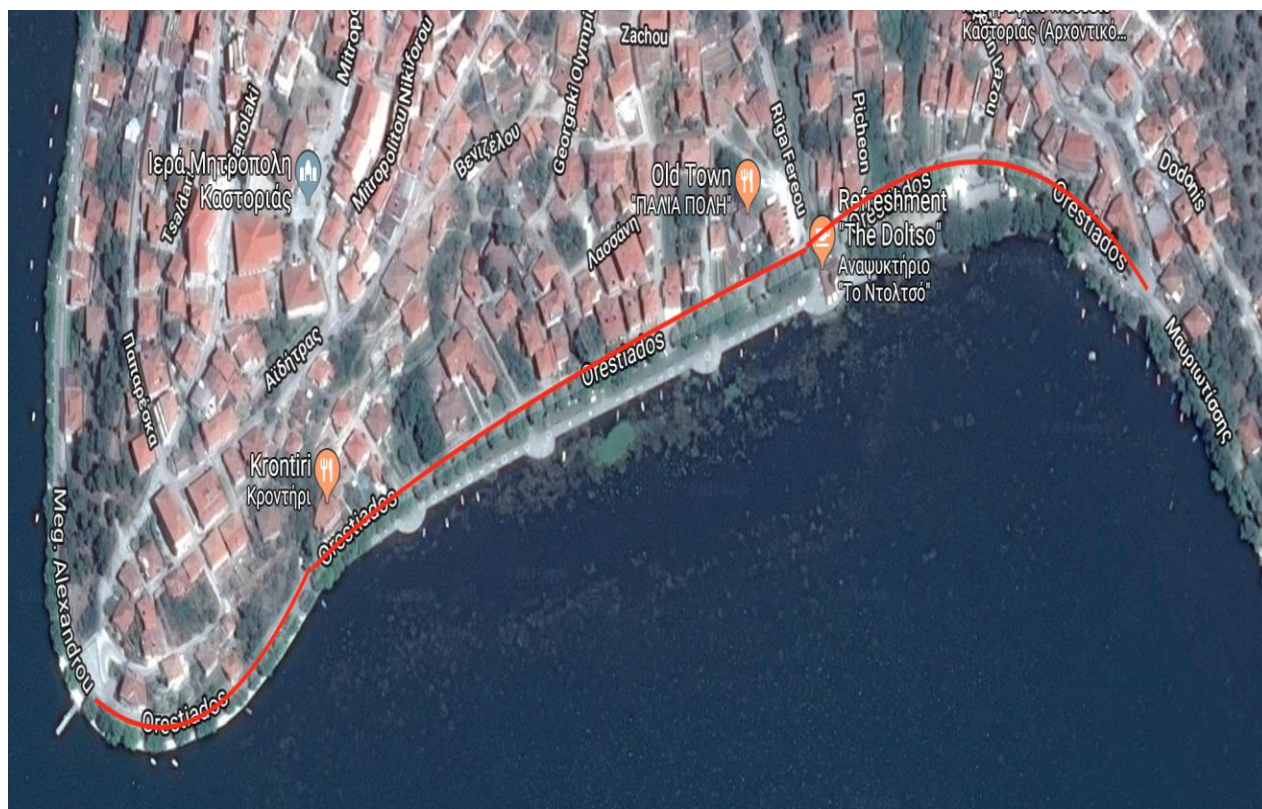
The main problem of this part of the street does not lie here. It is common, as I have witnessed myself upon my multiple visits to Kastoria during the weekend, for many cars to illegally park on either side of the street, and even, in many cases **double-park**. The road therefore turns into a single lane road, where cars must enter the opposite lane to get through. Apart from being illegal, this can prove to be extremely dangerous for pedestrians as well as drivers. One miscalculation can lead to a head on crash between vehicles, or

since the speed limit is not always followed by drivers, restaurant and bar staff may be seriously hurt in their attempt to serve their customers on the other side of the street.

I therefore call the municipal authorities to take immediate action and prevent to the best of their abilities the illegal parking that takes place on Megalou Alexandrou Street during all days of the week. Alternative parking places are offered to a great extent in the large outdoor parking lot across the Prefecture building (at the corner of Kiknon Avenue and Megalou Alexandrou Street).

Furthermore, parking should be allowed only on one side of the road to make it easier for drivers to get through especially during the hours of high traffic. This is a must. For those who do not wish to comply with regulations, traffic police or municipal police presence should always be evident on site to make sure that no one parks illegally, or double parks. Mid-lane barriers, prohibiting drivers from entering the opposing lane can also serve as a preventive measure to this problem.

→Orestiadou Street (Οδός Ορεστιάδος)



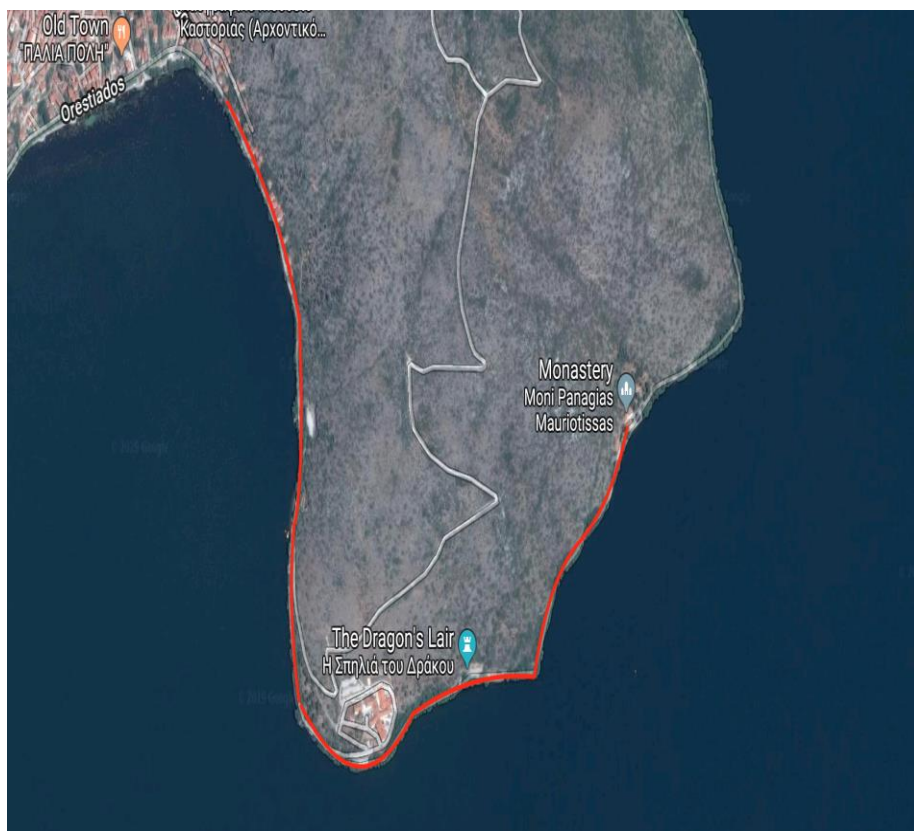
1.9

Eventually, as mentioned above, right after the first bend in the road at the end of the southern shore “bar district”), and as one approaches the Doltso (Old Town) district, Megalou Alexandrou turns into Orestiadou Street (see image 1.9). Since mostly traditional restaurants are located alongside this strip of the road, and at quite a distance from one another, the traffic problem here is not as evident or common. Adding to this, previous

municipal authorities have wisely created small indents in the walkway's outer rim, as parking places on the side of the road that faces the lake (*Angelis 2009*). This measure has been successful, and I can't help but wonder, whether something similar would be a positive step in dealing with traffic along Megalou Alexandrou Street. Yet, although parking spots along the lake on Orestiadou Street are offered, some inconsiderate drivers still have the tendency to park their cars, blocking a large part of the lanes in either direction. This must stop immediately, and preventive measures must be taken by the municipal authority to make sure this happens. By preventive measures I mean ticketing, no matter what the driver might pose as an excuse. Parking should only be allowed in designated areas along the street.

→Mavriotisis Street (Οδός Μαυριωτίσσης)

1.10

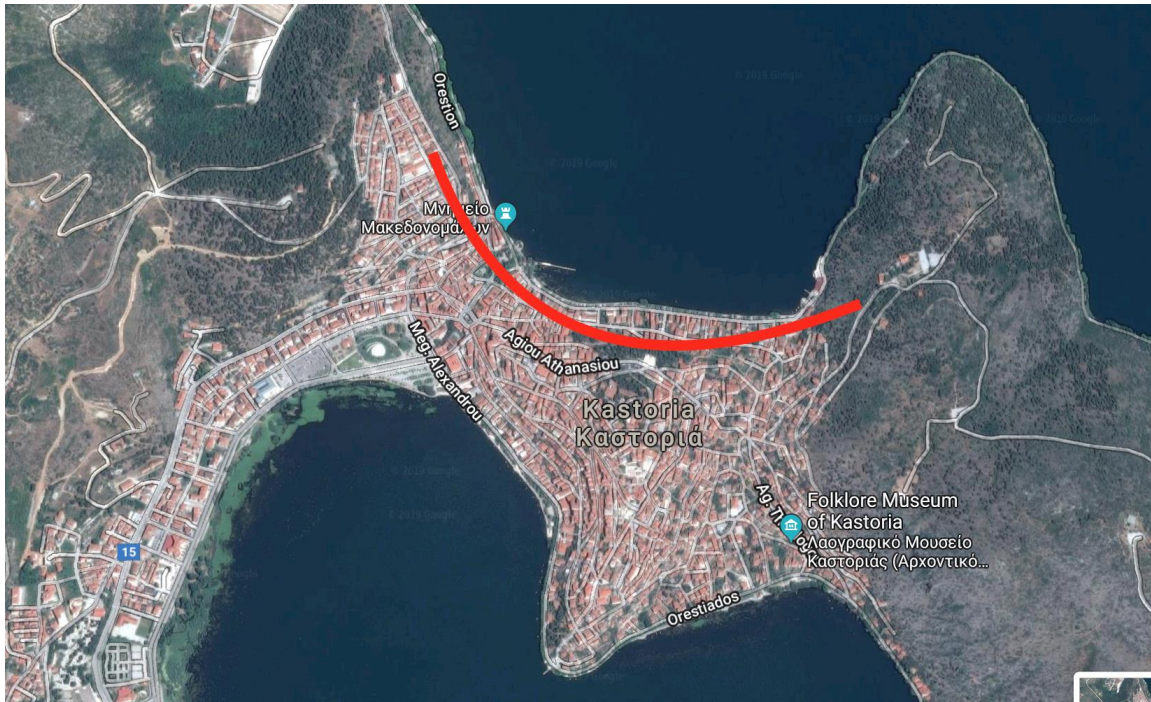


The third and final section of this long winding road along the southern shore of the lake, Mavriotisis Street (see image 1.10) leads directly to the Public Hospital. The road is relatively well-preserved and in good condition when it comes to the asphalt that was used during its last resurfacing (*Kim, 2008*). However, this road, right after the final houses built on the opposing side of the road facing the lake, and as you exit the Doltso District becomes very

narrow and equally dangerous. No protective barriers separate the road from the lake, and a wrong maneuver can end up in a disaster for any driver. Ambulances currently drive back and forth from the hospital to the city center and may runners enjoy their long runs around the peninsula from here. There are two ways that the situation in this section of the road can become better, one cheaper than the other, **a)** expand and widen the road into the lake until the hospital, **ii)** establish protective barriers on the side of the road facing

the lake, including night markers and/or effective lighting. Luckily, no cars tend to park on either side of this road, so traffic congestion is extremely rare.

→Northern Shoreline (Βόρεια Παραλία)



1.11

Although less busy and crowded than the southern shoreline, the northern shoreline, and specifically Nikis Street (Οδός Νίκης) (see image 1.11), also features many restaurants, bars, cafes as well as homes. As one completes the long, circular tour around the peninsula, he re-enters Kastoria at the northern shore and Nikis Street, which basically starts at the Kastoria Nautical Hall and ends at the Macedonian Warrior's Monument, before it turns into Orestion Road (Οδός Ορυσσείων). Nikis Street, which is two-lane in opposite directions, is very similar to Megalou Alexandrou Street on the southern shoreline, on the other side of the peninsula. It features cafes, restaurants and bars on the one side, including the famous “Apozari” old town district while right across the street is a walkway for pedestrians that hugs the lake. Although traffic is not a major issue here, illegal parking, once again on either side of the street can cause congestion and the need to maneuver into the opposite lane. Therefore, strict parking measures need to be used here as well from municipal authorities. The municipality needs to: **a)** create small indents within the large walkway as temporary parking spaces, **b)** allow the parking of all vehicles on only one side of the road at all times, **c)** impose strict measures on those who do not wish to follow traffic instructions by patrolling the northern shore of the lake.

ii) Public Squares

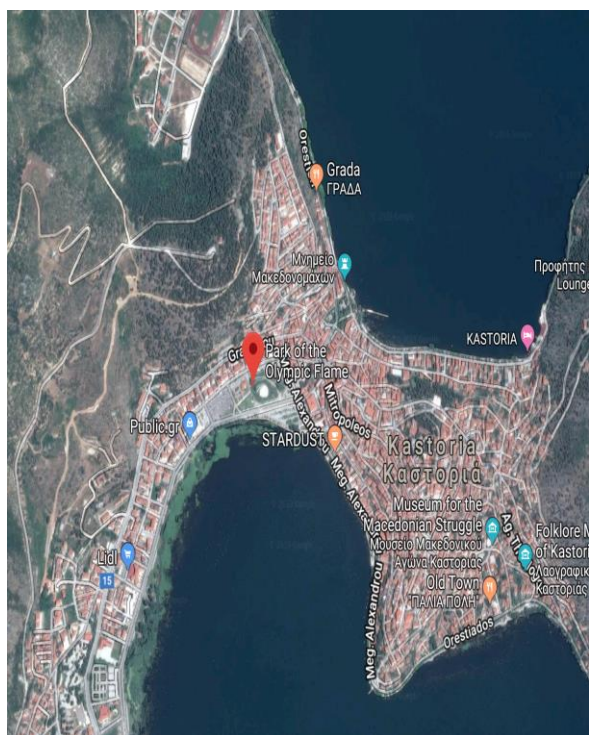
The importance of public squares in Greek cities, towns and villages (European for that matter) are immense and have played a significant role in the social aspect of the lives of their inhabitants (*Giddings, Charlton & Horne 2011*). In this section of my paper, I would like to deal with and analyze Kastoria's three main public squares (πλατείες) that I feel are in desperate need of reconstruction and modernization for the needs of the citizens of Kastoria as well of the city's visitors in the years to come.

The three squares I will talk about in this section are: **1) The Olympic Flame Park** (Πλατεία/Πάρκο Ολυμπιακής Φλόγας), **2) Omonia Square** (Πλατεία Ομονοίας), **3) Van Fleet Square** (Πλατεία Βαν Φλητ) together with the two smaller squares in the area; Makedonomahon Square (Πλατεία Μακεδονομάχων) and Germanos Karavangelis Square (Πλατεία Γερμανού Καραβαγγέλη). In *chapter VI* of my thesis paper, I also mention two more squares in the historic districts of Kastoria- Doltso Square (Πλατεία Ντολτσό) and Arozari Square (Πλατεία Απόζαρι) so I will not take them into consideration in this section.

The changes I recommend that need to be made to Kastoria's three busiest squares that are located in different areas of the city center, **1) The Olympic Flame Park** (Πλατεία/Πάρκο Ολυμπιακής Φλόγας), **2) Omonia Square** (Πλατεία Ομονοίας), **3) Van Fleet Square** (Πλατεία Βαν Φλητ) are rather simple, meaning they do not require much thought or an in-depth analysis, but need to be made as soon as possible. These squares represent Kastoria's main meeting points, as well as locations of interest, so they must always be in excellent condition.

→ The Olympic Flame Square/Park (Πλατεία/Πάρκο Ολυμπιακής Φλόγας)-

Complete reconstruction of Kastoria's main square/park that is located right on Kiknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων, see image 1.12) situated at the entrance of the city center it is amongst the first views that a visitor has of the city. It should be **immaculate** during all times of the day and should be clearly illuminated during the night hours (possibly using LED lighting as an energy saving method). Cameras or other surveillance monitors should be established throughout the location to ensure for the safety of trespassers as well as to **prohibit any attempts of vandalism** on public property within the park, especially on monuments such as the one honoring the National Resistance (Μνημείο Εθνικής Αντίστασης). Should vandalism occur, municipal crews should immediately locate it and take care of it. The fountain located in this park should always

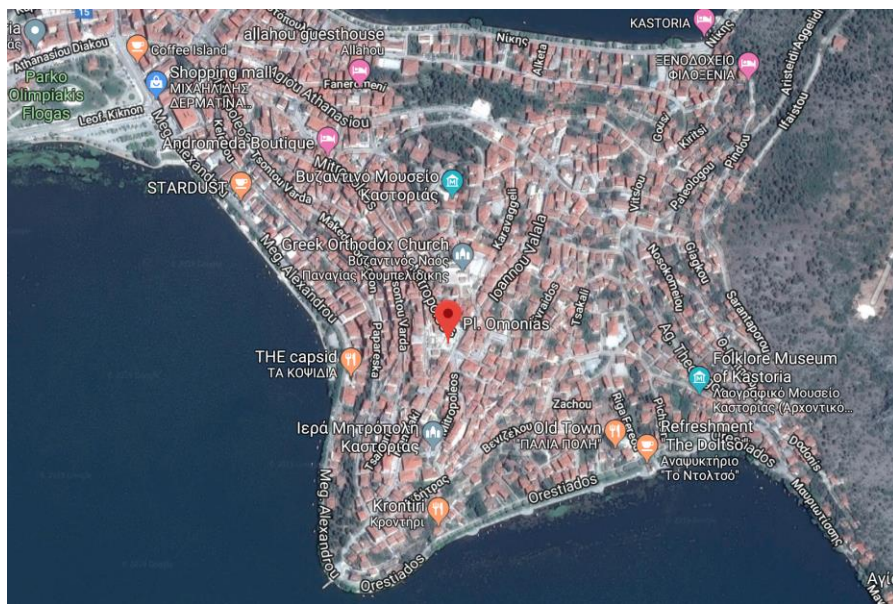


1.12

be functioning, and the surrounding greenery must always be maintained. Municipal staff must ensure that this location is always clean and tidy. Finally, vehicles should be prohibited from parking in any location that interrupts direct access to the park/square by visitors, and sidewalks leading to, or into the park should always be clear and easily accessed (including access points for the handicapped and mothers with strollers). Sidewalks should furthermore be protected by adding road poles along them designed to stop cars from parking on them. Signs should be placed throughout the park indicating different points of interest across the city and their distance from the current location. Benches and other rest-areas should also be well maintained. Furthermore, the public bathrooms in the square should be upgraded and cleaned.

→ Omonia Square (Πλατεία Ομονοίας)

1.13



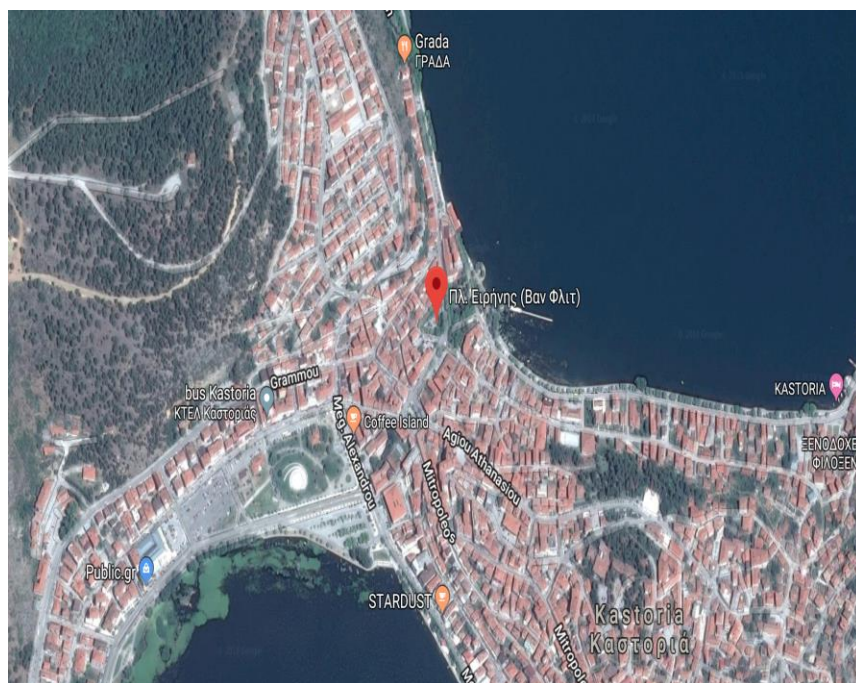
Although this Omonia Square (image 1.13) was recently reconstructed/renovated and is in relatively better condition than the other main squares of the city, it needs to be more appropriately maintained on a 24/7 basis (*Angelis 2009*). I have personally witnessed signs of vandalism along the square's exterior walls running alongside

Moshopoleos Street (Οδός Μοσχολέως) and Mitropoleos Street (Οδός Μητροπόλεως), the two main roads flanking the square. Again, I urge the municipal authorities to install a surveillance monitor system for the better monitoring of the square during all times of

the day. Littering in this square is also a major problem and should be taken care of as soon as possible. Also, parking can be rather anarchic around the square so the municipal authorities should enforce strict parking regulations and create designated parking areas, including parking spots for the handicapped that will always be protected.

→ Van Fleet Square (Πλατεία Βαν Φλητ), also Germanos Karavangelis Square and Makedonomahon Square (smaller squares adjacent to the much larger Van Fleet square)

1.14



Also referred to as “Liberty Square” (Πλατεία Ειρήνης, see image 1.14) Van Fleet square can get rather hectic during rush hour (like on the days of the public market) and that is because of the ongoing traffic in and around this area. The three roads that flank the square, Ioustinianou street (Οδός Ιουστινιανού), Arti street (Οδός Άρτης) and Orestion street (Οδός Ορεστέων), are two-way roads and extremely narrow. Cars sometimes park on either side of the roads

making it impossible to drive along them. The Van Fleet square parking lot offers some limited space for cars to park but should be better organized and parking spots should be better defined as well as the entry and exit driveways. Drivers should not be allowed to park outside the designated parking areas to avoid traffic congestion.

These three squares mentioned above, literally divided by one road, need to be in excellent condition. The monuments located there, should always be maintained, as well as illuminated during the night hours. The public greenery must be in tip-top shape, trees always trimmed, flowers placed in multiple locations to enhance the visitors' visual experience, the sidewalks reconstructed, and the stone walkways always checked for cracks or holes. Access points for everyone must be made at different points in these squares, and the sidewalks should **ALWAYS BE PROTECTED** from parked cars. Finally, more benches need to be placed in and around these three squares, and the different walls need to be whitewashed repeatedly so they do not show signs of decay.

iii) Vandalism and Littering

This is probably one of the most important sections in my thesis paper and one of the greatest issues that Kastoria (and any other Greek city or town for that matter) faces and has not been able to deal with (*Bambouri, 2017*). That's why I would like to place a direct emphasis on them, in hopes that they will be solved as soon as possible. Simple problems, that no authority to this day has managed to completely eradicate to provide both Kastorians, as well as tourists with a clean and organized urban setting that many other Europeans in other countries enjoy today. The negative impact that these two main problems of vandalisms throughout the city and littering, mainly on the road network and places of public interest have, is immense to say the least (*Bambouri, 2017*). Kastorian municipal and prefectural authorities, together with the people must team up very quickly and find a permanent and long-term solution for these problems.

-Vandalism of public and private property in Kastoria

In modern Greek society, graffiti (also referred to as “street art”) is evident around every corner of every major and minor Greek city or town (*Bambouri, 2017*). Graffiti in the form of murals with a decorative purpose is something that, in coordination with municipal authorities and with a strict limitation to where it can be applied, can benefit a city or town giving a colorful note of incredible precision and beauty to certain neighborhoods and areas. However, graffiti in the form of “tagging” (basically scribbling letters, nick-names, team logos etc.), on public buildings, private establishments, monuments, even road signs and bus stops, is something that destroys the general facade of any given city, and provides locals as well as tourists with a feeling of strong negativity and disgust (*Cybriwsky, Ley, 2018*). Beautiful historic neighborhoods in main cities in Greece like Athens and Thessaloniki, as well as cute neighborhoods, have befallen a state of complete deterioration, where tagging is evident everywhere. Political messages, club logos, nicknames of street artists and their crews “decorate” every inch of public and private property across Greece, without any consideration of how the general public feels about it, or about the unimaginable damage that it causes to the tourist industry (*Bambouri, 2017*).

Kastoria, being a medium-sized city in Greece also faces this problem to a great extent. One can see graffiti tags nearly everywhere, from road signs, to parks and town squares, municipal buildings (especially the Court House on Mitropoleos Street) even churches and important historical monuments. Taxpayers, who have paid their taxes to the city in order to ensure that themselves as well as their children can be provided with a clean, organized graffiti-ridden environment, are not taken under consideration. The case is so bad, that the people feel completely incapacitated to deal with this issue and have come under a state of complete indifference (*Snyder, 2006*) because no one seems to care about tackling this issue effectively. If we want to even consider the potential of Kastoria

growing into a key European all-year round tourist destination, minor issues, but with such a major implication on the tourist industry, **MUST BE PERMANENTLY DEALT WITH**. I do not think I can stress the importance of this more.

Graffiti tagging is a misdemeanor and thus is strictly prohibited by law (*White, 2001*), and yet no authority in Greece has had the political courage to deal with it properly. Kastoria can be the first. It is unacceptable for beautiful Byzantine churches, newly renovated parks and squares, statues and other monuments to be spray-painted on as if they are in some of America's worst slums and favelas (*Iddings, McCafferty, 2011*). It shows complete disregard for the city's history and more importantly for the city's people who pay for these places and monuments with money from their own pockets.

In Kastoria, I must sadly admit that I personally have seen spray-painted road signs (which is extremely dangerous for drivers!) beyond repair, bus stops painted by team logos (on Kiknon Avenue), and even monuments spray-painted as if they mean nothing. I have even seen the main Court Building as well as the Prefectural Building on Megalou Alexandrou Street, in the heart of the city spray-painted. The main discouraging factor is not so much that the youths of the city feel the need to express themselves by vandalizing public and private property, but that **NO ONE** does anything about it. Monuments, parks and public buildings stay vandalized for days on end and no one seems to care to clean them or enforce and implement stricter laws on those who vandalize (*Zevas, 2009*).

Municipal and Prefectural authorities in Kastoria must: **a)** organize a team of city cleaners, with proper equipment, that will deal with such phenomena of vandalism daily so that the damage will cease to be evident both in the eyes of the citizens as well as the tourists. **b)** **STRICTLY ENFORCE BY LAW** (with the help of the prefectural and municipal police) the prohibition of street-art vandalism on public buildings, monuments of cultural heritage, road and traffic signs, and other public areas like parks and squares. **c)** Provide immediate assistance to those home/store owners who have had their properties vandalized and cannot afford to clean them. I pray that the next municipal authority of the city takes a hard stance against the vandalism of public and private property. It is easy, does not cost much and therefore there is and there will never be a good excuse for it not being implemented.

-Littering in public/Garbage collection

Another extremely important social/public aspect that I would like to touch on is littering and the city garbage problem. In general, Kastoria, as do most other Greek cities for that matter, faces a big problem with its public cleanliness. Main roads, such as the two national roads linking Kastoria to Grevena (ΕΟ Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών) and Nestorio (ΕΟ Καστοριάς-Νεστορίου), apart from being extremely dangerous for drivers, and weakly constructed, are also indescribably dirty. I would like to remind readers that these two national roads are the only entry ways into Kastoria via Dispilio and Maniaki. Therefore, the first image that someone visiting the city gets as he enters from one of these

two roads is disheartening to say the least. Garbage in every single form and size imaginable can be seen scattered left and right from ongoing traffic. Garbage that is not collected regularly but remains there for months on end.

The same can be said about central areas in or near the city center. For example, I recently noticed how dirty the Olympic Flame Park (Πάρκο Ολυμπιακής Φλόγας) can get during the night hours. Youths tend to spend their time in some of the city's parks and squares however fail to collect their garbage and leave it behind to never be collected (*Malandrakis, Chatzakis 2014*). It is disgraceful for a city wanting to attract foreign tourism to not be able to control its public littering problem. Greeks who may be used to trash being scattered here and there will be more forgiving than foreign tourists. In the 21st century all it takes is a couple of pictures on social media and a once perfect and beautiful tourist destination can easily be turned into a “garbage bin” if local authorities do not immediately and actively tackle this issue (*Roussos, 2009*).

When it comes to littering in public, Greeks certainly receive a “gold medal”. One can often see Greek drivers placing their hand outside the window of their vehicle throwing on the street or sidewalk anything from a lighted cigarette butt to a glass bottle of beer, a can of coke even an entire bag of home-collected garbage! It is a disgusting habit that has placed Greece amongst Europe's dirtiest countries (*Roussos, 2009*). Kastoria, as a municipality and as a prefecture **NEEDS TO BAN THIS IMMEDIATELY**. There are two ways to solve this problem: **a)** establishing a non-littering policy in accordance with the law, by which anyone who blatantly litters in public is fined either by the local municipal police or the Hellenic state police or-because Greeks have the tendency to be all too forgiving sometimes and pretend like nothing is a big enough deal to care about, **b)** Make sure that every single main public area including roads and sidewalks, are cleaned on an almost daily basis by the municipal and/or prefectural road and city cleaners. Just like the graffiti issue it is simple, and not at all costly. All it takes is patience and willingness to succeed.

In accordance to the two means of tackling the garbage issue in the city of Kastoria, I would like to add that the city also faces a **recycling problem** (*Petkanas, 2018*). I have rarely seen the blue recycle bins located on streets even in entire neighborhoods. Seeing to the fact that once again, together with Romania and Cyprus, our country holds one of the last three places on the “recycling map of Europe” (*J Malinauskaite, H Jouhara & D Czajczyńska 2017*) it is important for local authorities to not only inform people about the importance of recycling for their own good as well as the environment’s good, but also to provide them with the means to do so. The greater number of blue recycling bins there are in Kastoria, the more people will recycle.

Multiple seminars should also be held on an annual basis by the municipality, as well as organized volunteer projects by schools and organizations, to inform the citizens of Kastoria of the negative implications that littering in public has both on local as well as on tourist life. Educating the youth in schools and engaging them in volunteering for a “better, healthier, cleaner city” is the tool of tomorrow's success in this area (*Malandrakis,*

Chatzakis 2014). It is a method that is followed in multiple other cities across Europe and should start in Kastoria as soon as possible (*Torgler, Frey, Wilson 2009*). Kastorians are open-minded and I feel both the older generations as well as the children and youth would most definitely embrace and appreciate anything having to do with making their city cleaner.

I urge the local municipal leaders, in direct and constant cooperation with their prefectural counterparts, to do everything necessary to make Kastoria a clean, non-polluted tourist destination. I guarantee that should nothing be done within the next months with the garbage collection problems, Kastoria will miserably fail in attracting the numbers of foreign tourists that it aims at attracting. Cleanliness is amongst a foreign tourist's highest priorities when attempting to visit a foreign destination. No park, no monument, no public space or tourist destination should ever be dirty and should constantly be cleaned PERFECTLY. No excuse in the year 2019 is acceptable when it comes to garbage collection and a clean, healthy public environment.

2.

-Maintenance of Public Greenery

Another issue that affects, not solely the municipality of Kastoria, but that of Greece as a whole, is the maintenance of public greenery (flowers, plants, trees etc.) that are used both for environmental purposes in any given municipality, as well as for the adornment of public property (*Xiao, Li & Webster, 2016*). Although this section could fall under the one described above (“Littering in public/Garbage collection”), as most public greenery in Kastoria, especially along the main roads is never maintained properly and is covered with garbage and trash, I decided to give it its own section in this paper, as its significance to the growth of tourism in the city is detrimental (*Chaudhry, Tewari 2009*). Yet, people (mostly municipal authorities) don't seem to care. Weeds, rotten trees and wild grass spring up from cracks in sidewalks, in main public squares and along main road routes that lead into the city. These wildflowers and weeds may be small, but to the eye of the tourist are more than noticeable. Can one imagine what the road leading to the Louvre in France, the road to Buckingham Palace in London, or the road leading to St. Peter's Square in Rome would look like had their sections of greenery not be maintained perfectly? What an impression of neglect it would cause in the eyes of the foreign tourist?

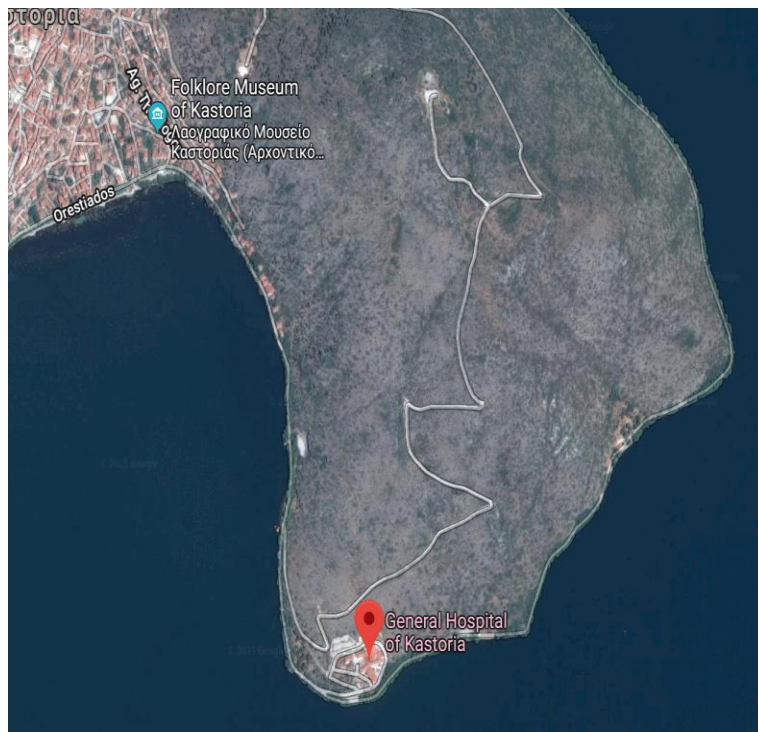
Once again, in this paper I call for the municipal authorities in cooperation with the prefectural authorities of Kastoria, deal with this simple yet constant issue, by appointing public gardeners the task of trimming, cutting and generally maintaining on a daily basis, the flowers, trees, bushes that do so much not solely to the image of the city but for its rich natural environment as a whole. **ESPECIALLY** focus on the maintenance of greenery of the main routes leading into the city center (the Kastoria-Grevena National Road and the Kastoria-Nestorio National Road), as well as along the city's main avenues (like Kiknon Avenue for example and Grammou Avenue). In simpler terms, turn Kastoria into a “green city” where the public greenery is constantly given the right attention to

become welcoming to the eyes of the tourist as well as to the eye of the citizen.

iv) Education and Healthcare Facilities

-The Kastoria Public Hospital (Γενικό Νοσοκομείο Καστοριάς)

1.15



During my last visit to Kastoria on May 7th, 2019 for the purpose of conducting interviews to complete my thesis paper, I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Vasilios Antoniadis, the head director of the Public Hospital of Kastoria (Γενικό Νοσοκομείο Καστοριάς). In a very interesting interview, Mr. Antoniadis informed me of multiple aspects of today's Public Hospital that I did not previously know about as well as about its future operations.

The Kastoria Public Hospital (see image 1.15) is the sole healthcare facility in the entire Prefecture of Kastoria so its

existence and the role that it plays for the populace is of great importance (*Voltsidou, Pantazi 2015*). It is in a rather “remote” location outside the city, near the tip of the Kastoria peninsula by the popular tourist attractions, “Dragon's Cave” (Σπηλιά του Δράκου) and Mavriotissa Church (Ιερά Μονή Μαυριωτίσσης) which are less than two minutes down the same road. The hospital is located on a small hill off of Mavriotissis street (Οδός Μαυριωτίσσης) to the left which is the lakeside road that encircles the peninsula and leads from one side of town to the other (the “North Shore”/Βόρεια Παραλία to the “South Shore”/ Νότια Παραλία). Adequate street signage in Greek as well as English located throughout the city can serve as a guide to the location of the hospital. The hospital can be accessed by car, taxi or by the public bus (Αστικό ΚΤΕΛ Καστοριάς) connecting it with the city center.

Mr. Antoniadis has been the head director of the Kastoria Public Hospital for three years now, and he strongly feels that during his tenure in this position the hospital has been vastly improved, has been adequately staffed by nurses and doctors (from multiple areas of medical expertise) and generally is in a much better condition than what it was

prior to his arrival. “Prior to my arrival”, Mr. Antoniadis stated, “the hospital was in such a terrible condition and vastly understaffed, that there were thoughts of turning into a small medical center rather than a hospital. This means that Kastorians would have had to travel to the nearby cities of Ptolemaida or Kozani if they needed to be interred into a hospital” (*Antoniades, 2019*). Mr. Antoniadis felt that it was detrimental for Kastorians that the hospital remains in Kastoria for their own safety and well-being, something that in fact occurred in recent years. Mr. Antoniadis did not only talk about the improvements in infrastructure, the hard-working medical staff at the hospital, and the overall organization within the facility and the hospital's campus but of a very interesting expansion project that is underway in the nearby town of Argos Orestiko (Άργος Ορεστικό) located approximately twelve kilometers south of the Kastoria city center. “A brand new, beautiful rehabilitation facility is to be established in Argos Orestiko”, Mr. Antoniadis explained. “Although plans to establish a rehabilitation facility in Argos Orestiko, in an already existing building, was something that had been considered over twenty years ago in 1998, with money spent on research and development, nothing happened until now. Our aim is for this new rehabilitation facility to offer excellent healthcare services to our citizens completely free of charge, and we want to make it so, that even Europeans who seek rehabilitation care can come and be healed at our facilities” (*Antoniades, 2019*).

It was a genuine idea that I had not thought of before, and I would term as “medical tourism” (*Horowitz, Rosenweig 2007*). As Mr. Antoniadis claimed, the natural environment in Kastoria is ideal for people suffering from different kinds of neurological, musculo-skeletal and other orthopedic conditions. The new facility is located very close to the “Aristoteles” Airport of Kastoria in Argos Orestiko and more importantly near to the thermal springs of the village of Ammoudara (Αμμουδάρα Καστοριάς) which are known to clinically be of great importance to the rehabilitation of patients. Mr. Antoniadis exclaimed that a pipeline could be established from the thermal springs in Ammoudara to the new rehabilitation facility in Argos Orestiko (approximately four kilometers). Therefore, one of the new facility's main components will be a thermal spring water pool which is of extreme importance to the rehabilitation of patients. Mr. Antoniadis believes that this facility (set to be inaugurated soon according to his sayings) unique of its kind and services in Greece, that will eventually reach a capacity of thirty beds, can attract patients from all over Greece but from abroad as well. When asked about the funding of the hospital's operations, Mr. Antoniadis told me that most of the funds are provided by the Greek Health Ministry, but European funds are also secured through the ministry.

Finally, Mr. Antoniadis and I talked about one major issue that the hospital faces and that he has been trying to force public officials to take care of. The sole lakeside road leading up to the hospital, Mavriotissis Street (Οδός Μαυριωτίσσης), which is a two-lane street up until the hospital junction, is very narrow and extremely dangerous. “One of my main concerns regarding this facility is Mavriotissis Street”, Mr. Antoniadis explained. “It is extremely hard for our ambulances to maneuver in such a narrow road that is not adequately lit at night and offers no protective railing towards the edge of the lake. It is

very dangerous both for our medical staff as well as for our patients who are transported to and from the hospital” (*Antoniades, 2019*). Mavriotissis Street (Οδός Μαυριωτίσσης) is in fact extremely dangerous and narrow for a two-way street leading to a hospital.

Mr. Antoniades suggested that numerous of the sycamore trees that are found on either side of the narrow road be cut down up until the hospital junction so that the road can be widened. “We have faced opposition, because the entire peninsula cliff is a 'Natura' environmental site, and therefore some people disagree with us cutting down trees. I see it this way though, if let's say one day the cliff catches fire, how will we evacuate all of these people from the hospital?”, Mr. Antoniades said, and he was of course right. When it comes to the sake of human security, that is always first no matter what.

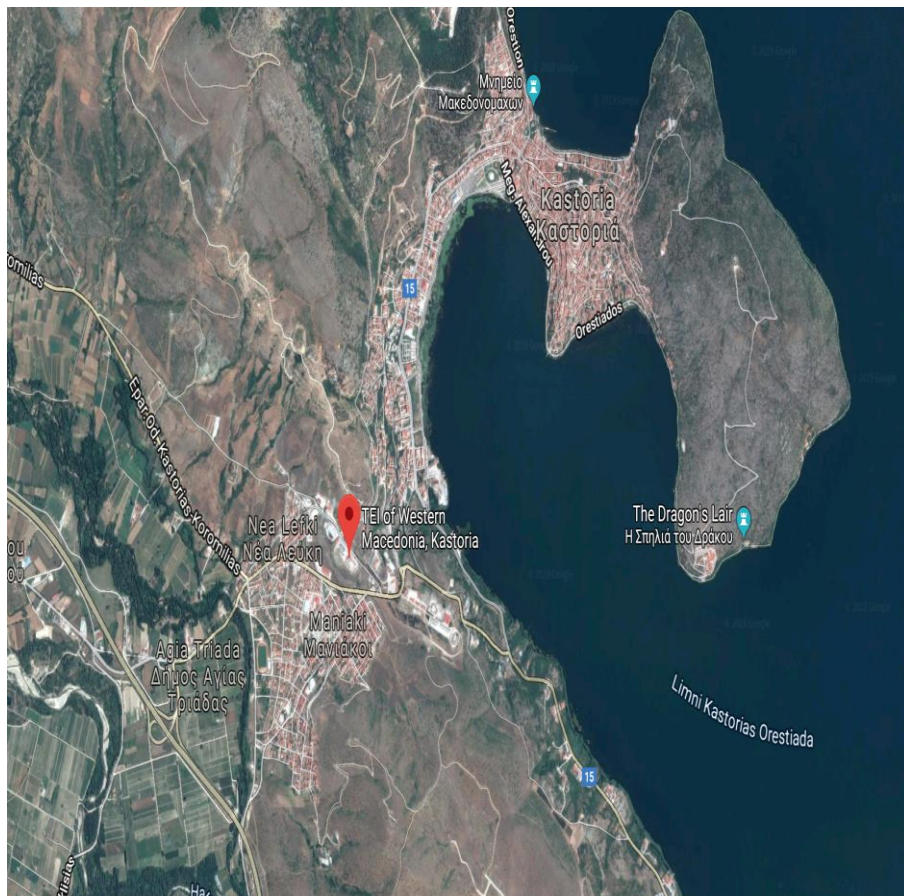
After my interview with Mr. Antoniades I had the opportunity to take a walk through the hospital and meet some doctors and medical staff. I found them very helpful and willing to speak to me, which is not something common within many Greek public facilities or offices. Some of the issues however that I would like to mention and point out regarding the hospital, and that I would urge the staff to improve are:

- a) The interior of the hospital was not in a bad condition by any means, was clean and organized (including the toilets) and the patients' rooms (I visited a friend who was staying there for treatment) but the exterior could definitely use a “lifting” as it was not in good condition. For example, multiple marble stairs leading to certain buildings need to be replaced, sidewalks need to be constructed and resurfaced (those that exist) for a better access of patients and the general public, the railings should be repainted and of course all building need to be repainted.
- b) Parking in the hospital courtyard was extremely chaotic and anarchic, and there were no parking lines indicating where cars should be parked. Luckily the handicapped spaces were clearly indicated, and no one had parked there (at least while I was there).
- c) Signs indicating the different hospital buildings, or offices/departments within the building were only in Greek. I would suggest adding English as well.
- d) Better maintenance of exterior area (better garbage/trash collection as well as maintenance of public greenery).
- e) Translate the official hospital's website (<https://www.kastoriahospital.gr/>) to English and keep it updated on a daily basis.

*For more information about the Kastoria Public Hospital (Γενικό Νοσοκομείο Καστοριάς) feel free to contact the main reception office which operates 24/7 at: **24673-50600**. The exact address of the hospital is: **33 Mavriotissis Street, Kastoria, 52100**

-Technical Institute of Western Macedonian (ΤΕΙ Δυτικής Μακεδονίας)

1.16



Education in any given location is important. An educational facility and what it has to offer its students as well as the greater community to which it belongs is of vital importance. A good school, college or university can elevate any given town or city providing its youth with countless opportunities and an outreach to the rest of the world. The Technical Institute of Western Macedonia (TEI Δυτικής Μακεδονίας, see image 1.16) is a modern university campus facility located near the suburb of Maniaki (Μανιάκοι) in the

residential area known as Nea Lefki (Νέα Λεύκη). Founded in 1996 in the outskirts of Kastoria, it is accessible via the Kastoria- Nestorio National Road (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Νεστορίου) near the Drakopoulos Military Camp (Στρατόπεδο Υπαγου Δρακόπουλου). It is no more than a five-minute drive from the Kastoria city center and can be reached either by car, or by the local bus system (Αστικό Κτελ Καστοριάς). More than one thousand undergraduate and graduate students from all over Greece study at the Technical Institute of Western Macedonia at Kastoria, including many foreign Erasmus students (particularly from Portugal) that come here for their semester abroad. The university features five different departments and areas of study for potential candidates and serves as a satellite campus for the main campus located in the city of Kozani. The university also offers five different MBA degrees for graduate students. The campus is made up of two large main buildings that include staff offices, an auditorium, a library, multiple lecture rooms and halls and is ultimately funded by the Greek government via the Ministry of Education in Athens (Kalogiratou, 2019).

I had the opportunity to meet with the heads of two departments at the University

including the head librarian Mr., Professor Kalogiratou (Department of Computer Science and Technology) a Professor Monovasilis (Department of International Trade) who talked to me about the University, its future potential, its facilities and importance to the economy of Kastoria. Sadly, due to the economic recession that hit Greece over the past decade, the number of students enrolled in the university has dropped by more than 50%- a horrific blow to the local economy. Many students who are accepted to the Technical Institute of Western Macedonia decide to transfer to other schools in Greece that offer similar or identical fields of study, due to the expenses. They prefer to stay closer to home than move to Kastoria (*Monovasilis, 2019*).

During my visit I was able to take a mini tour of the campus-both buildings (built in 2008) including the excellent library, many of the lecture rooms, and visited the dining hall. I must say that the dining hall is also in exquisite condition, offering students a wide variety of healthy meals, refreshments and snacks. The approach to the campus from Kastoria's city center, as mentioned above, is easy (local bus, car), although there are no sidewalks (huge minus) for students who may possibly wish to walk or use alternative means of transportation (i.e. bicycles) to get to the campus from the city center (*Kalogiratou, 2019*). There is a large parking lot located right outside the two main buildings after one enters the campus main gate, that however does not have clear parking lanes, so many people tend to park close to the entrances of the buildings. That is something that could be taken care of, as well as a parking spaces/access points to handicapped persons. Signage throughout the university buildings is adequate. Graffiti and vandalism on school property is minimal (except for one smaller building located within the campus that was in very bad condition and vandalized), and the general surroundings and area both outside as well as within the buildings (including the dining hall) were clean, neat and organized.

I was personally thoroughly impressed by the campus, and with the staff at the Technical Institute of Western Macedonia in Kastoria, who were all more than willing to speak to me and show me around (even though my arrival was sudden). The university offers, as mentioned previously multiple very fascinating and captivating fields of study, both at the undergraduate and graduate level and by itself, being a European university that offers internationally recognized programs, provides a very effective means of promotion for the city of Kastoria to Europe and the world. Therefore, Kastoria needs to desperately hold on to this educational institution for the short-term (students studying there, boosting the local economy) more importantly though, for the long term (global promotion, foreign students arriving to Kastoria via the Erasmus program etc.). Local authorities must do everything in their power to not solely keep this institution within the city, but accordingly promote it to Greece and to the rest of Europe. A possible relocation of the university campus to another city would have a calamitous impact on an already weary Kastorian economy.

Hopefully in the future with the expansion of this institution (as I discussed with Professor Kalogiratou), some athletic facilities (football pitches, basketball courts, tennis

courts, a track and field facility, a swimming pool or even an indoor gym) as well as a dormitory for male and female undergraduate students may be constructed on campus grounds to increase the university's capacity and overall status (*Kalogiratos, 2019*).

*For more information about the Technical University of Western Macedonia in Kastoria feel free to visit their website, www.kastoria.teiwm.gr which is very analytical, provides adequate instructions, guidance and information about the institution in both Greek and English, or feel free to reach the institution by telephone at: **24670-87060**.

III) KASTORIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY- LONG TERM FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

-Kastoria Suburban Tram System

Having travelled within Europe multiple times, to cities that resemble Kastoria in size (population, area, morphology), I have noticed that what Kastoria lacks (among many other things), is a suburban railway system, linking the city center with the nearby suburbs, and of course the Airport at Argos Orestiko (subsecuntially Argos Orestiko as well). If in fact tourism in Kastoria rises, as expected, within the next decade, and there is a great influx of foreign businesses willing to invest and establish headquarters for business development in the area, it will be mandatory for the city to be able to provide both citizens as well as tourists (foreign and domestic) with an alternative, safe and rapid means of transportation within the city and its nearby suburbs.

-Establishment of basic line of Suburban Tram System (Kastoria → Airport)

In a chapter section of my thesis paper, I will analyze the importance of the development of the Kastoria Airport “Aristoteles” (located just outside Argos Orestiko), in order to attract great numbers of foreign tourists, not solely to the city of Kastoria, but the prefecture as a whole, with all it has to offer. In the case that tourism and foreign investment, reaches a peak within the upcoming years, it will be necessary for the airport to be connected to the city center of Kastoria, by a means of transportation other than by the local bus system.

The **Suburban Tram System**, mentioned above, could prove to provide a satisfying solution to a sudden rapid influx of visitors to the city, who wish to get from the airport to the city center. Primarily, a two-way line, connecting the Kastoria city center with the airport, running along the Kastoria-Grevena national road (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών), could prove to be a future goal that the local municipal authorities could start looking into. Due to the proximity between Kastoria and the Airport (14.5 km distance), the dual-line tram system can also provide the citizens of Argos Orestiko and Dispilio with

an excellent means of transportation to and from Kastoria. Stops can include certain important central locations in given areas that the Tram system will pass through (including interest points for tourists- like the Neolithic Lake town settlement outside Dispilio or the Fur Trade Center, if the Tram follows an alternative route, or is branched out in that direction).

There are multiple cities and towns in Europe with a population similar or even smaller to that of Kastoria that boast tram railway systems, offering their citizens and visitors with an alternative way of safe and enjoyable travel. Bad Schandau (Germany), Trencianske Teplice (Slovakia), Gmunden (Austria), Soller-Mallorca (Spain) and Blankenberge (Belgium) are all cities (or towns) with a population of under twenty thousand inhabitants (smaller than the Kastoria metropolitan area) that all maintain a tram railway system. (*Hirano, Kitao 2009*)

-Branching out the Suburban Tram System (Hloi, Maniaki, Nea Lefki, Technological Institute of Western Macedonia)

The establishment of a Suburban Tram System, primarily connecting the city center of Kastoria, to the Airport at Argos Orestiko, could eventually branch out from the main line and be used for further public transportation, connecting the city center with the nearby suburbs of Hloi, Maniaki, Nea Lefki (where the Technological Institute of Western Macedonia is located). Therefore, whereas the initial, basic line of the two-way tram system will run from Kastoria city center, to the Airport (via Dispilio), two separate branches can eventually be established, one heading north towards Hloi and the other west towards Maniaki and Nea Lefki. A terminus for the line connecting the Kastoria city center to Maniaki-Nea Lefki, could be the Technological Institute of Western Macedonia (TEI Δυτικής Μακεδονίας) for example. (*Hirano, Kitao 2009*)

-Funicular to Agios Athanasios, Profitis Elias or Aposkepos

Many small Medieval towns and villages located at high altitudes in the Mediterranean are serviced by funicular train systems that offer them the ability to transport people to and from a location at a lower altitude as a form of public transportation, usually in the absence of other means of transportation (i.e. buses, trolleys, light rail etc.) and for recreational/tourist purposes. (*Benigar, 2004*) The “Funicolare Como-Brunate” is a funicular transportation system that is located just outside the Como town center, connecting Como to the small hilltop village of Brunate that overlooks the entire lake, offering spectacular views to locals and tourists alike. It is one of Como's most prized tourist attractions, gathering hundreds if not thousands of tourists on a daily basis, who take the seven minute long cable train ride up to Brunate, where multiple small tourist shops and local restaurants await them, while the small village offers a beautiful walk for

those who wish to trespass its cobble-stoned streets. The cable-train runs daily from 8 am till about 11 pm and the approximate cost for an adult is 4.5 € (ale retour).

Having witnessed the massive success of this funicular system in Como, I began contemplating if a project like this could be applied (in the future) to Kastoria as well. Kastoria is like Como in that it is built on a mountain and placed in the middle of Orestias lake. It has many locations at a higher altitude that offer amazing panoramic views of the lake and its natural surroundings. Many of these places, which are only accessible by car, have other things to offer tourists apart from simply breathtaking views. **Agios Athanasios** and **Profitis Elias** are two hilltop locations that each offer a church as well as a cafe and/or restaurant, which are actually very popular among Kastorians for a weekend excursion and are located at a no more than 10-15-minute driving distance from the city center.

Aposkepos (Απόσκεπος Καστοριάς) is a small village located approximately three kilometers north of Kastoria at an altitude of roughly 790 meters. It is very close to the northern suburb of Hloi and can be accessed by car via the Kastoria-Prespes National Road (Ε.Ο. Καστοριάς-Πρεσπών). It is an incredibly beautiful traditional Macedonian village, that has a small-town square, traditional cafes and restaurants and the beautiful Church of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary (Ιερός Ναός Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου). Its quaint and charming character offers for the perfect evening excursion for anyone who wishes to depart Kastoria for a while and experience a small Greek village that offers incredible views of Orestias lake while towering over the entire city of Kastoria.

Anyone of these three locations could be linked with a starting point in Kastoria with a funicular train and become a major tourist attraction. The funicular system will offer a much more environmentally friendlier means of transportation to these points of interest, as well as faster and safer (compared to driving there by car, as the roads are not in the best condition, especially the ones leading up to Agios Athanasios and Profitis Ilias, that can be extremely dangerous for drivers during the evening/night hours as they are narrow, lighting is not adequate and there are no protective barriers). (*Benigar 2004*)

Also, the cable-train system, no matter where in the world it has been applied and used to connect two points of interest, is something that tourists will prefer compared to other means of transportation (*Benigar, 2004*). Of course, a project of this magnitude would demand years of planning and examination, including a serious portion of funds to be attained. It is nonetheless a positive idea that could provide Kastoria with yet another unique characteristic to attract more and more tourists.

-Lake boat tours

Probably the most important element that will contribute to the overall positive tourist experience within Kastoria, it is unbelievable to say the least, that Kastoria does not offer a single lake tour by boat to visitors. In an upcoming chapter of my thesis paper, I will mention how Como, Italy was able to attract so many tourists to its lakeshore, offering numerous lake tours at different times of the day, while simultaneously

connecting all the small villages along the lake, and multiple different tourist attractions located by the lake together, so that someone can visit them easily using a single-ride ticket.

Up until recently a lake boat by the name of “Olympia” (Ολυμπία), was the sole boat that offered tourists the ability to take a tour of the lake (it started operating in 1997 by the Ganis family of Kastoria). (*Ziakas 2019*) One could board the boat at multiple different locations: **1)** at the northern shore of the city, **2)** at the southern shore of the city and **3)** at the small lakeshore village of Mavrochori (Μαυροχώρι) located directly across Kastoria at the other side of the lake, **4)** at the “Dragon's Cave” and **5)** at the Mavriotissa Church. A website of the boat tour information still exists today (<http://www.karavakikastorias.gr>), although the boat has ceased to operate due to underfunding and a lack of tourist interest and use (*Angelis, 2018*). The total duration of the lake tour was approximately one hour and forty minutes and offered, apart from an excellent alternative to “getting to know” the lake and its natural environment, a cheap, effective and easy way to get from one location to the other within Kastoria and its surrounding area.

I also mentioned how Kastorians that I have personally spoken to and interviewed are utterly disappointed by the fact that no one has seriously thought or considered about bringing such a necessary means of transportation to a city that is literally engulfed by one of Greece's most beautiful lakes.

It is mandatory that a project like this be planned out and executed as soon as possible. Within the next 5 years, Kastoria should create a central departing area for all lake boats and establish a network of stops and drop-off/pick-up points along the lake. There is no reason for us to analyze the potential tourist growth of the area if something like this is not implemented as soon as possible. No tourist will visit a lakeshore city, without being able to take a lake tour on the lake.

-Funding of future “mega” projects

Many people in Kastoria who I have shared my ideas with ask me one question every time I mention the mega projects listed above as something that I would like to see happen in the city within the next five to ten years: “Where will we find the money for these projects?”. I fully comprehend that at a time of economic crisis and recession similar to the one Greece has been facing since 2009, funds are extremely limited to say the least. This factor, combined with the unbelievable bureaucracy that characterizes the Greek public sector, especially after the outbreak of the fiscal crisis with the introduction of new laws and regulations, certainly makes even the consideration of projects like the ones mentioned in this chapter, something closer to “science fiction” than reality (*Papaconstantinou, Tsagkanos & Sidiropoulos 2013*).

However, I do believe that should Kastoria be able rejuvenate its local economy and develop certain areas of interest (i.e. tourism) that can bring money and opportunities

to the city in the years to come, it will accordingly attract foreign investment from abroad. The fact of the matter is, the amount capital needed for projects like the ones mentioned in this chapter, at this point in time and for the next decade at least, have to come from abroad, whether that is in the form of European subsidies (*Kunzmann 2010*) or direct foreign investment capital (*Afkos, 2018*).

-Kastorian Expats

The initial steps in securing foreign funds, must be made primarily by attracting successful **Kastorian Expats** who live abroad (America, Canada, Australia etc.) and would be willing to invest in their city of origin and/or heritage (*Afkos, 2018*). Due to the fur industry thousands of Kastorians have travelled and decided to live abroad, while simultaneously amassed good fortunes from their business operations (*Makris, 2000*).

A great example could be Mr. Paul Afkos from Perth, Australia (who I interviewed for this paper), a native of Nestorio, Kastoria, who decided to build a beautiful boutique hotel in his village providing jobs and opportunities, while also uplifting the status of Nestorio. Being a Greek-American myself, and having attended multiple seminars of the Pan-Macedonian association in the United States from 2011 to 2015, I was able to meet many Kastorians who were not only extremely successful with their businesses, but also expressed a true desire to someday return to Kastoria and invest there. This has been also expressed by a very close relative of mine who, however, was deterred from doing so because of the extremely complex bureaucracy that exists in Greece.

Any investment requires that the person making the investment will be benefited in some shape, way or form (*Papaconstantinou, Tsagkanos & Siriopoulos 2013*). Therefore, in order to attract Kastorian expats living abroad, Kastorian municipal and to a greater extent Prefectural authorities need to: **a)** come in contact with them and inform them of their agenda, **b)** keep in contact with them at all times no matter what and **c)** properly invite them to Kastoria either for a grand reunion (that can happen annually) or at different times of the year individually (*Afkos, 2018*).

Basically, Kastoria must aim at creating a “invitation project” through which it will be able to attract and gain the interest of Greek Kastorian expats who live abroad. Should this happen, and should expats start showing interest in the “product” of Kastoria, other foreign enterprises will most definitely follow, until finally the Kastoria investment market becomes highly competitive and in real estate or other assets of the municipality become high in demand. Kastoria desperately needs foreign investment, and this is a first step in the right direction (*Afkos, 2018*).

-The European Union

I have always considered the European Union as an indispensable source of finance in providing Kastoria in the years to come with the appropriate funds for it to achieve its short-term but most importantly long-term goals. Through various funding programs the European Union has managed to salvage and rebuild multiple impoverished and underdeveloped areas in Europe, that do not necessarily belong to member states of the European Union.

Kastoria luckily is a city in Greece, a country which is not only a member of the European Union but of the Monetary Union as well. However, I personally do not feel that Kastoria, and other regional Greek cities or towns for that matter, are taking that to their ultimate advantage. There are numerous E.U. funds that specifically target smaller urban or rural areas of E.U. member-states that have been secluded or isolated by other greater metropolitan areas, to which most of the allocated funding goes to. *“Medium-sized towns located beyond metropolitan regions in Europe are among the victims of the current metropolitan fever in Europe”* [...] *“Medium-sized towns in such regions are particularly hit by the increasingly competitive global economy.”* (Kunzmann, 2010). That is not to say however, that opportunities are not there. Under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) there are multiple branches of economic funding targeted specifically at boosting regional/peripheral economies. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund (CF) for example, offer a significant amount of economic support to those regional areas in Europe that are not within the “metropolitan spotlight”.

According to author Klaus R. Kunzmann, *“While, as a rule, small and medium-sized towns within metropolitan regions in Europe clearly benefit from the growing economy, those beyond the geographically disadvantaged hinterland of thriving metropolitan regions, seem to lose out. This is the case in Western, Central and Southeast Europe, though even more so in Eastern Europe, where most economic development is concentrated in a few capital city regions only”* (Kuzmann 2010). Sadly, Kastoria falls into this category, not solely because funds are mostly aimed and absorbed by the main metropolitan areas of Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki), but also because other E.U. funds that Kastoria could use for the development of areas such as tourism for example, are targeted towards other parts of Greece like the Ionian Islands, the Aegean Islands and Crete. Based on statistics presented within the book of my Professor and councilor at the University of Macedonia Mr. Christos Nikas, since 1983 and the introduction of law 1262/82 by the Greek parliament for the development of tourism and the cultivation of the tourist industry in the different Greek peripheries, Western Macedonia (to which Kastoria belongs) has repeatedly had significantly lower funding compared to other regions in the country (especially compared to the Aegean/Ionian islands) (Nikas, 2006).

The fact of the matter is that the funds provided to Greece are distributed by the elected government in Athens to the heads of the Regional Offices in the country, which in the case of Kastoria is the head of the Region of Western Macedonia (also known as

the Prefecture of Western Macedonia). (*Nikas, 2019*) The Head of the Regional Office then distributes funds accordingly to the cities, towns, villages and other areas under his/her jurisdiction (*Nikas, 2019*). Kastorian municipal authorities must therefore get as many of these funds as possible. This can only happen if, **a)** substantial pressure is placed on the Regional office of Western Macedonia and through them to the Greek government, **b)** Kastoria maintains a very close and tight relationship with the head of the Regional Office in order to “gain his/her favor”, and of course **c)** the municipality of Kastoria, together with all third parties interested in acquiring the European funds, come up with an analytical, organized and highly adequate short or long-term plan that denotes the reason or reasons for which they seek this funding.

Based on the latest database provided to us by the NSRF (National Strategic Reference Framework) also known as “ΕΣΠΑ” (Εθνικό Στρατηγικό Πλαίσιο Αναφοράς) in Greek, Kastoria as of April 2019 has qualified for receiving 2.395.000 euros in economic aid through the “Leader” financing programs of the European Union aimed at economically supporting individual public or private entities within the Kastoria Prefecture. This specific “Leader” financing program is composed of twelve different sub-actions aimed at providing economic leverages to different areas and sectors of economic growth and development within the prefecture (agriculture, tourism etc.).

Should bureaucracy, be one of a number of multiple issues that harden and halt communication between public political offices in Greece cause any kind of trouble, Kastoria's municipal authority should do everything in its legal power either to, **a)** ensure that the appropriate funds are allocated to them for the completion of their plan at all times (infrastructure, marketing, tourist development etc.) or **b)** find a way to directly come in contact with the appropriate offices in the European Union headquarters in Brussels, and demand certain funds from them so as to put pressure on the Greek government through them.

Kastoria **MUST USE** the European Union to its ultimate advantage and continuously. The European Union would be more than a perfect source of financing for the projects the city must put forth and has the means to do so. That is of course, as long as Kastoria as a city has a well thought out and very organized plan to present to them and maintains a “bridge of communication” at all times.

Mr. George Petkanas interview

My writing of this thesis paper luckily coincided with me meeting an important political figure of Kastoria who ran for mayor in the upcoming local elections in May of 2019. Mr. George Petkanas has been member of Kastoria's city council for decades and spearheaded the “Responsible Alliance” (Συμμαχία Ευθύνης) movement. He was intrigued by my project and what I am trying to accomplish through it for the city, and so decided to support me on its completion by introducing me to numerous people from Kastoria who I had the chance to speak with and interview. I furthermore had the chance

to present my project to the members of his political movement, as well as use a part of my paper as an introduction to his opening electoral speech in January of 2019.

Mr. Petkanas however did not only point me in the right direction but also sat down for an interview himself, telling me of his plan to “approach” the European Union in a very interesting way that I had personally not thought of. Mr. Petkanas believes that it would be a very good idea to open an office in Brussels to constantly be closer to the E.U. and always be informed of certain funding projects or programs that the European Union has to offer. The cost for maintaining such an office would be much too high for a single Greek municipality the size of Kastoria to support, so Mr. Petkanas thought that it would be wise in order to minimize cost, to do so in cooperation and coordination with all other mayors of cities, towns and villages that belong to the prefecture of Western Macedonia (*Petkanas, 2018*). Should they all come together and decide to implement something like this, each sending a representative or representatives from their area to their “common office” in Brussels, they would not only ensure for a better understanding of the E.U. and its regional funding policies through which they could benefit, but would also highly promote the region of Western Macedonia and all it has to offer to the rest of Europe. I personally believe that this would be a brilliant accomplishment and something that Kastoria would highly benefit from (and of course Western Macedonia as a whole).

IV) KASTORIA- AN ALL-YEAR-ROUND TOURIST DESTINATION

Dubbed by many over the years as the “Lady of Orestias Lake”, Kastoria combines incredible natural scenery, a mild climate in the summer, Alpine climate in the winter and unbelievable architectural gems of its Byzantine Greek and Ottoman historic past (*Dermitzakis, Kouli 2010*). It's one of the very few cities in Greece that can boast being built on a beautiful lake- a city that truly experiences all four seasons in their fullest and most amazing forms.

That being said, the city of Kastoria should have been bustling with tourists all year-round- tourists not solely from Greece but from abroad as well. Should it have been in any other European Union nation, Kastoria's economy would be booming at a rapid pace with everything it has to offer. However, Greek bureaucracy, combined with a very primitive mentality in combination with erratic and tragic economic mistakes of the past, and the current economic crisis of Greece that leaves barely any room for potential development, has placed Kastoria in the shadows of the modern, global tourist scene.

In any case, it is time that things change for the better. That the local authorities and public come together in an attempt to better their outlook towards the tourist industry, leaving behind personal differences of the past and uniting in achieving a high standard project- that of giving their town a global “brand name” or “branding” (*Papantina 2019*) that they can be proud of but simultaneously can make them extremely competitive, and

why not in the near future, a role-model for other Greek cities of the north, that do not offer the stereotypical Greek holidays of “sun and sea”.

Ms. Soultana Papantina, author of *‘The development of Kastoria as a city break destination’*, mentions the importance of “branding” or providing a destination with a brand name as crucial to the development of the tourist product in a city like Kastoria. According to Papantina, branding offers three very important things to a city: **a)** improving a given region’s identity or “status” internationally, via a powerful and highly focused place marketing strategy, **b)** the ability to target certain groups within the labor force that may contribute to this aim (thus creating highly specific job opportunities) and realize the vision and **c)** finding multiple cost-effective ways in achieving this goal, so as to minimize cost of expenses in the long run. (Papantina 2019)

Kastoria is the perfect example of a “city-break” destination, or “city only” destination as expressed by Dunne, Flannagan and Dudley in their analysis *‘Towards an Understanding of International City Break Travel’* (Dunne, Flanagan, Dudley 2010). According to the authors, **a)** cheaper airfare with the introduction of low-cost airlines within the air travel market, **b)** the branding of cities/urban areas as ideal locations for quick trip getaways and finally, **c)** the extensive use of media and technology in the promotion of cities as ideal short-trip destinations, are three main factors that have highly contributed to the rapid growth of the “city break” locations. (Dunne, Flanagan, Dudley 2010) Authors Dunne, Flanagan and Dudley also give certain characteristics to City Break Travelling which they term as the “5 Ds of City Break Travel”. As the authors describe the 5 Ds are as follows: **a) Duration-** cities that are feasible to visit in short stays ranging from 24-hour trips to weekend trips **b) Distance-** the approximate distance of a given tourist location in relation to the starting point of tourists, or in more simple terms, where the vast majority of tourists will be coming from, **c) Discretionary nature-** meaning trips that are designed to work at the discretion of those taking them (each individual’s purpose for taking the trip) **d) Data flexibility-** where did most people decide to go and the ultimate reason for this and finally, **e) Destination travel party-** the number of people that decided to travel together in groups, travel with a partner or family member, or travel solo. (Dunne, Flanagan, Dudley, 2010). All these characteristics mentioned above function as the backbone of City Break Travel and the ultimate impact it will have on both the tourist/visitor as well as the location he/she decides to visit.

As will be mentioned further in this chapter with the detailed presentation and analysis of the multiple places of historic, cultural, religious interest that Kastoria has to offer, it most definitely qualifies as the ideal “City Break” destination, the perfect example of experiencing alternative tourism in Greece throughout all four seasons of the year. A perfect city for the promotion of so-called “Heritage Tourism” which is a branch of tourism directly aimed at certain locations of significant historic, cultural sites within a given geographic area, which in this case is the city of Kastoria (Dragouni, Fouseki 2018). As the authors of the scholarly investigation *‘Drivers of community participation in heritage tourism planning: an empirical investigation’* argue, Kastoria is the perfect

example of a “Heritage Tourism” location and that is because, “**(i)** *it is rural and isolated, (ii) it has a depressed economy due to its declined manufacturing, (iii) it features a rich collection of heritage assets, including archaeological sites, medieval monuments and traditional architecture, and (iv) its tourism sector is currently developing and could gain a competitive edge by focusing on special interest heritage tourism.*” (Dragouni, Fouseki 2018).

Having interned for two consecutive years at the Cleveland Museum of Art in University Heights, Ohio (2013-2014) beside Byzantine curator Mr. Stephen Fliegel, I was able to not only conduct historic research within this institution, but also get a good understanding of what a serious twenty-first century, cultural institution must look like and what it must offer its visitors apart from important artifacts. I therefore personally took it upon myself to visit every single one of the important historic and cultural monuments of Kastoria and, based on my own experience, understanding and interpretation formulate a simple and general informatory basis for each one including directions, location, general information and changes that need to be made. I luckily had the opportunity to speak with many individuals who work in these locations.

i) Monuments and Main Attractions

-Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Churches and Monuments (Βυζαντινές Εκκλησίες και Αξιοθέατα)

Kastoria is well known throughout Greece as being one of the best examples of a well maintained Byzantine historic city in the country. The city's Byzantine past dates back thousands of years, and multiple Byzantine and post-Byzantine era churches still stand today, reminding the visitor of this city's greatness and its importance to Emperors, Empresses as well as to the Christian Orthodox religious faith (Drakopoulou 2013). Below I account for some of the most important Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments (churches for the most part) that still stand in Kastoria today and can be visited. The different churches feature unique architectural designs (according to the religious “trends” of the era in which they were erected) as well as unbelievably beautiful interior decorations in the form of religious tapestries and icons (Iordanidis 2011). It is noted that over sixty different churches of that historic era can be found in the city of Kastoria and its surrounding area alone. The city of Kastoria is a walking museum of Byzantine history in its entirety!

-Byzantine era churches (most notable churches)

- i) Saint Stephanos (Άγιος Στέφανος)- 9th century a.d.
- ii) Panagia Koumbelidiki (Παναγία Κουμπελίδικη)- 10th century a.d.

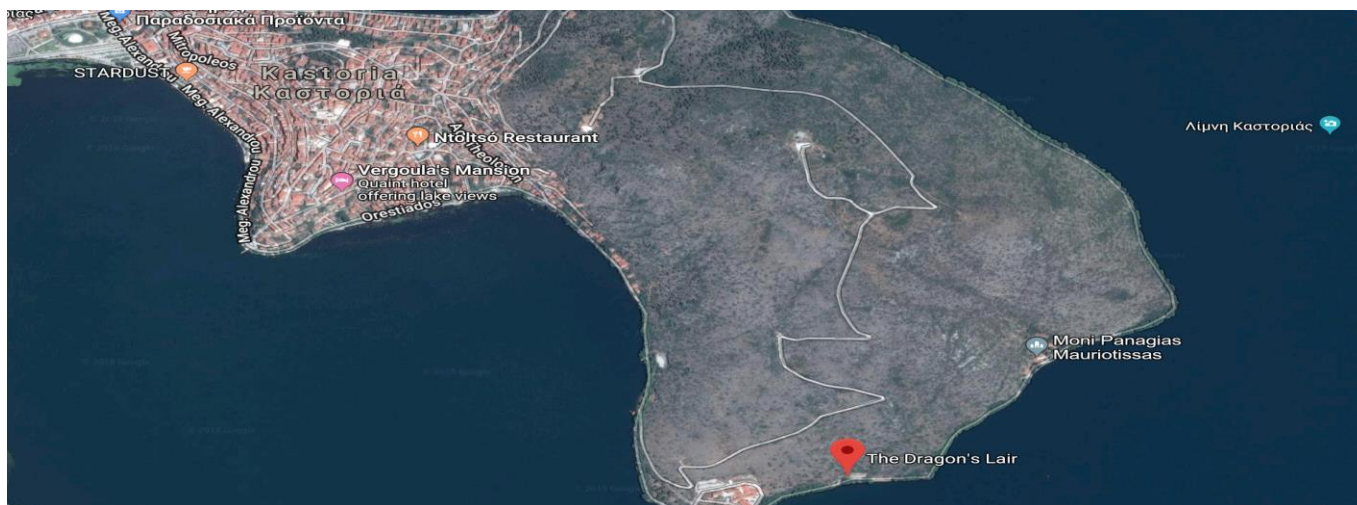
- iii) Anargiri Saints (Αγίων Αναργύρων)- 11th century a.d.
- iii) Taxiarchis Mitropoleos (Ταξιάρχης Μητροπόλεως)- 10th century a.d.
- iv) Panagia Mavriotissa (Μονή Παναγίας Μαυριώτισσας)- 11th century a.d.
- v) Taxiarchis Gimnasiou (Ταξιάρχης Γυμνασίου)- 12th century a.d.
- vi) St. Nicholas Kasnitzes (Αγίου Νικολάου του Κασνίτση)- 12th century a.d.
- vii) Panayias Faneromenis (Παναγίας Φανερωμένης)- 14th century a.d.
- viii) Three Saitns (Άγιοι Τρείς)- 14th century a.d.

-Post-Byzantine era churches (most notable churches)

- i) St. George Politeias (Άγιος Γεώργιος Πολιτείας)- 16th century a.d.
- ii) Panagia Mouzeviki/Agios Menas (Παναγία Μουζεβίκη/Άγιος Μηνάς)- 17th century a.d.
- iii) Metropolitan Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos (Καθεδρικός Μητροπολητικός Ναός Κοιμήσεως της Θεοτόκου)- 19th century a.d.

→ Dragon's Cave (Σπηλιά του Δράκου)

2.1



i) Directions

The “Dragon's Cave” (Σπηλιά του Δράκου; see image 2.1), is located on Mavriotissis Street (the lakeshore road that surrounds the peninsula), just before the Byzantine Church of Mavriotissa, and right after the Municipal Hospital, approximately 2.7 km from the city center of Kastoria. It is accessible by car and from the “southern shore” (νότια παραλία) of the lake (Orestiados Street, later Sougarridi Street which passes directly in front of Doltso, the old town, eventually turns into Mavriotissis Street just after the exit to the Hospital). Please beware, that Mavriotissis is a one-way street and can

therefore ONLY be accessed by driving from the southern shore (νότια παραλία), not the other way around. A large parking lot is offered at proximity, and a new cafe/bar is located nearby the cave, for snacks and refreshments.

ii) At the cave

The amazing cave has over 10 “rooms” (or smaller caverns inside), multiple pathways and an incredible number of stalactites. There are approximately seven small lakes within this cave, which is a truly amazing creation of nature, providing a sense of awe to anyone who visits it. Although no signs of human activity have been found within the cave at any given time in the past, a bear skeleton was discovered (*Ursus Speleaus*) which lived in Europe approximately 10,000 years ago. Cave temperatures don't vary much, and remain at a constant, year-round 16-18 °C, while humidity within the cave is around 90%. According to legend a dragon is believed to have lived in the cave which was eventually killed by King Kastor.

The cave itself has been a local site of entertainment for decades, although just recently was it renovated and opened as an official tourist attraction (*Angelis 2018*). Safe, guided passageways have been marked throughout the entirety of the cave, allowing for the visitor to walk through all the different caverns without getting lost or confused. Lighting has been placed in multiple different areas, together with protective railing and emergency buttons in case of an accident. Optoacoustic information is offered in different locations of the cave, informing tourists (sadly only in Greek as of now) of different aspects of the cave and what has been discovered. At the cave's exit, a large tunnel is the tourist's last stop, which bears multiple different pictures and many informative boards of what was just witnessed while taking the walking tour of the cave.

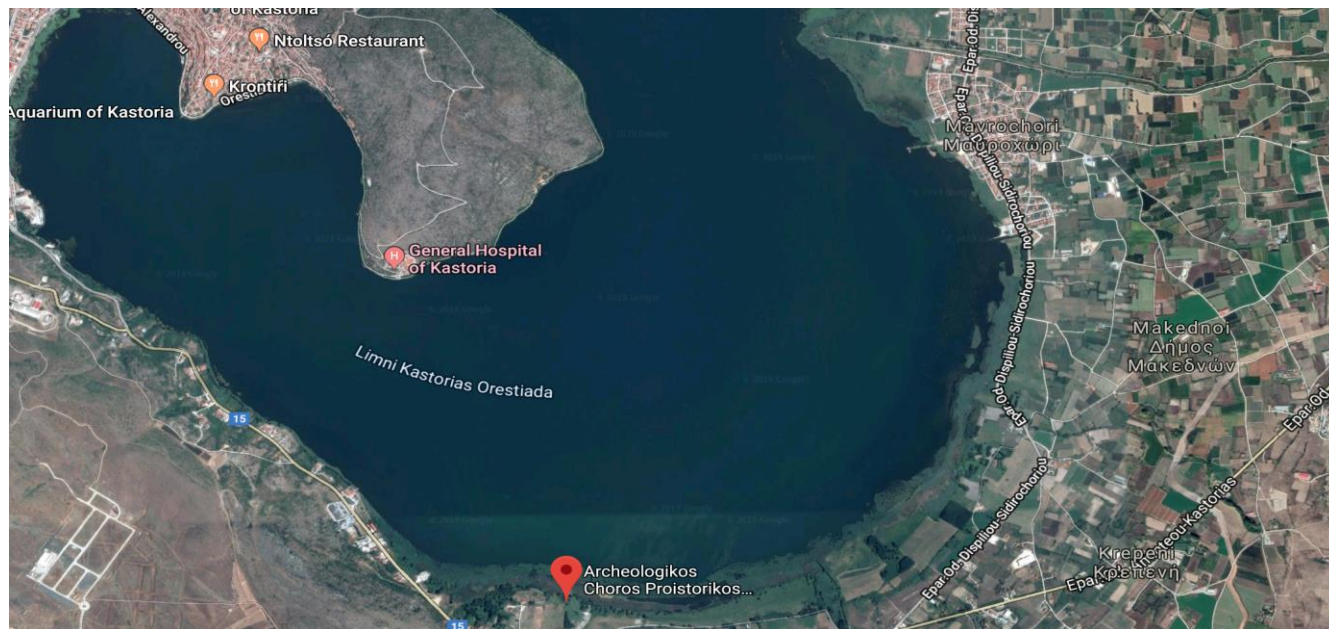
For more information feel free to contact the “Dragon's Cave” office via telephone: **24670-26777**, or visit the official Dragon's Cave website: (www.spilaiodrakoukast.gr).

iii) Improvements

- Translate the optoacoustic information of the cave's walking tour in English as well.
- Provide more road sign indicators along the main streets of Kastoria, especially as one is nearing the cave, for the exact location.
- Rid nearby parking area of garbage and graffiti.

-Lakeside Neolithic Settlement in Dispilio (Νεολιθικός Οικισμός Δισπηλιού)

2.2



i) Directions

The Lakeside Neolithic Settlement of Dispilio (see image 2.2), is located just outside Kastoria in the nearby suburb of Dispilio (approximately 7 km. south of the city center). One can access it by taking the Kastoria-Grevena National Road (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς Γρεβενών) which connects the center of Kastoria with the nearby suburb of Dispilio. Once in Dispilio, and while driving on the Kastoria-Grevena National Road that runs through the suburb, take a left or right (depending on your direction) on Analipseos Street (Οδός Αναλήψεως). Drive straight on Analipseos Street, once you reach Megalou Alaexandrou Street (Οδός Μεγάλου Αλεξάνδρου), take a right and follow Megalou Alexandrou Street to the location of the Lakeside Neolithic Settlement. Road signs indicating the location of the Lakeside Settlement are adequate throughout Dispilio so it should be located easily.

ii) At the Settlement

The settlement, which is believed by archaeologists to have been settled between 5600 B.C.E. -3000 B.C.E. is the oldest lakeside settlement of its type in Greece (*Karkanas, 2010*). Numerous items of the Neolithic era have been discovered at the location, since initial excavations started in 1932, including the world-famous “Dispilio Tablet”, a sign bearing an encoded and meticulous form of written language believed to be from the early

Neolithic era (*Ziakas 2019*). Today, the site has undergone mass archaeological excavations, and lakeside huts have been created, in an area of what once was the settlement. The purpose for the construction of these huts (is to provide visitors with an adequate representation of what life was like for the settlement's inhabitants more than seven thousand years ago (*Karkanas, 2010*).

The settlement covers a vast area of land on the outskirts of Dispilio and has basically been transformed into a huge outdoor nature park-museum. Its facilities however are not in the best condition and are somewhat run down. Once arriving at the main parking area (the parking area is quite large, so parking should not be a problem during rush hours at the museum), there is a ticket building and another small building right next to it which houses the photography collection of the Lakeside Settlement, and which is interesting to visit. Right next to that building, one can find a small restaurant offering meals and refreshments.

The most noticeable part of one's visit to this settlement is, as previously mentioned, the 5-6 huts that have been created in a specific area to represent what lodgings were like for the people who settled there in the Neolithic era. Inside the huts, one can see different kinds of tools, cooking supplies, weapons etc., that were used by the people who lived in the settlement. The small huts have been constructed on large wooden planks over the lake's shore, just as they were built by the settlers back then.

It is a very impressive site to say the least, although it seems as if it has not been properly renovated or maintained in a very long time. The wooden pathway that leads the visitor to the lakeside huts is very old and seems to be rotting away (the area is rather wet and humid, due to its proximity to the lake). One can find broken lights and wires hanging here and there, and the huts have also not been properly maintained as well, their stubble roofs, on the verge of collapsing. No information signs are evident in front of the huts (in Greek nor English) to explain to the visitor what he/she is witnessing in every case.

Luckily, there was a tour guide, Mr. John Giakas, who gave us a tour of the settlement and talked to us about how it began, why the people settled on that part of the lake, what was their main food source, their everyday life like etc. He was very helpful and gave us a great deal of information about the Neolithic site, and told us what a privilege it has been for him to work there and inform locals as well as tourists of the great historic importance of this place not only in Greece but in Europe as a whole (as previously mentioned it is a one of a kind establishment). He also told us that he wishes in the future to see more huts built, he hopes that the place will be renovated properly for tourists, and that one-day access to the outdoor museum can be achieved via a boat tour from the lake. In other words, he told us about the construction of a platform for tourist boats from Kastoria to reach the settlement and depart from there. It is a great idea, not costly, very effective and the municipality should strongly consider in attempting it. Sadly, all the initial tools, and other Neolithic objects found at the site when the first excavations began, are in another museum in Dispilio, so one cannot see them on site (*Ziakas, 2019*).

The Lakeside Settlement is open daily (Mo-Su) from **9 am** to **5 pm**, and guided tours of

the settlement are always offered for all visitors. For any more information please contact the Dispilio Lakeside Neolithic Settlement Office via telephone: **24670- 21910** or via the municipal website (www.kastoria.gov.gr).

iii)Improvements

→A general renovation of the entire outdoor museum premises including:

- i) the settlement's huts
- ii) the pathway from the entrance leading to the huts
- iii) the wooden railing and wooden planks that serve as foundations for the huts
- iv) the entire wooden walkway
- v) the restaurant.

→The establishment of a video surveillance system to overlook and always secure the premises (24-7 security system awareness).

→Proper informative boards and signs throughout the settlement with information in Greek as well as English for tourists.

→The creation of more huts, to enlarge the mock settlement, and make it as realistic as possible for the visitor.

→Better advertisement (marketing) of the specific historic site throughout Greece and Europe.

→The creation of an independent website for the Lakeside Settlement providing adequate information for all those who wish to visit.

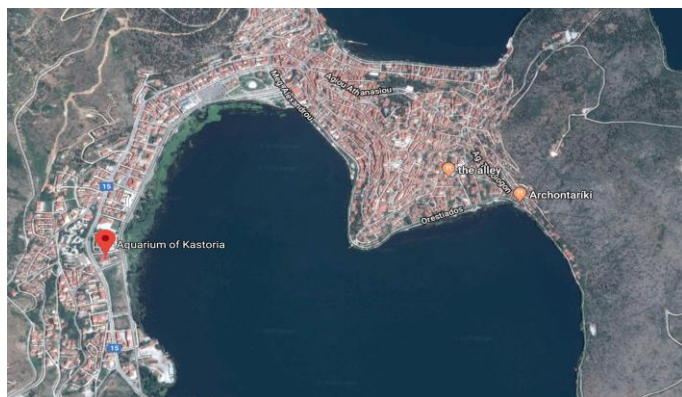
→Make the settlement accessible for tourists by water (a new lakeside entrance).

→Create a **new museum building on site**, so that the artifacts can be moved back to their location of origin and can be seen by visitors/tourists on their way in or out of the archaeological site without having to go somewhere else to do so.

i)A much cleaner, organized access point to the location. Today, the road leading up to the settlement is in terrible condition. It should be resurfaced immediately and should be in perfect condition for the tourists that will be visiting in the future.

-The Aquarium (Ενυδρείο Καστοριάς)

2.3



i)Directions

The Kastoria Aquarium (see image 2.3) is located on Zalongou Street number 3 (Οδός Ζαλόγγου 3). As one is entering the city from the Kastoria-Grevena National Road (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών) take the lakeside Kinknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων) heading

towards the city center. The Aquarium can be seen on one's left (from Kiknon Avenue) just before the “Traffic Park” (Πάρκο Κυκλοφορικής Αγωγής). One can also reach the Aquarium by taking Grammou Avenue (Λεωφόρος Γράμμου) which runs parallel to Kiknon Avenue. If you are arriving via Grammou Avenue you will make a right on Zalongou Street. The Aquarium (in relation to Grammou Avenue) is just before and across the street from the Military Cemetery of Kastoria.

ii) At the museum

While at the museum I was given a tour by Ms. Evi Petridou. She provided me with adequate information of the different kinds of animal species that are on exhibit within the museum. It is rather small however it is the largest sweet water aquarium in the Balkans (*Petridou, 2019*). It is clean, nicely maintained and very organized, each fish tank sign providing the visitor with information of every fish species in both Greek and English. The fish and other sweet water animals on exhibit range in sizes (from the rivers and lakes of the region). While ending the tour, one can find a small gift shop located right next to the exhibition room's exit door. Flyers are provided to visitors upon arrival. The museum hours run weekly from **9 am** to **5pm**, except on Mondays when the museum is closed for visitors.

For additional information on the Kastoria Aquarium, please visit the Municipality's Website (www.kastoria.gov.gr) or contact by telephone at **24670-80229**.

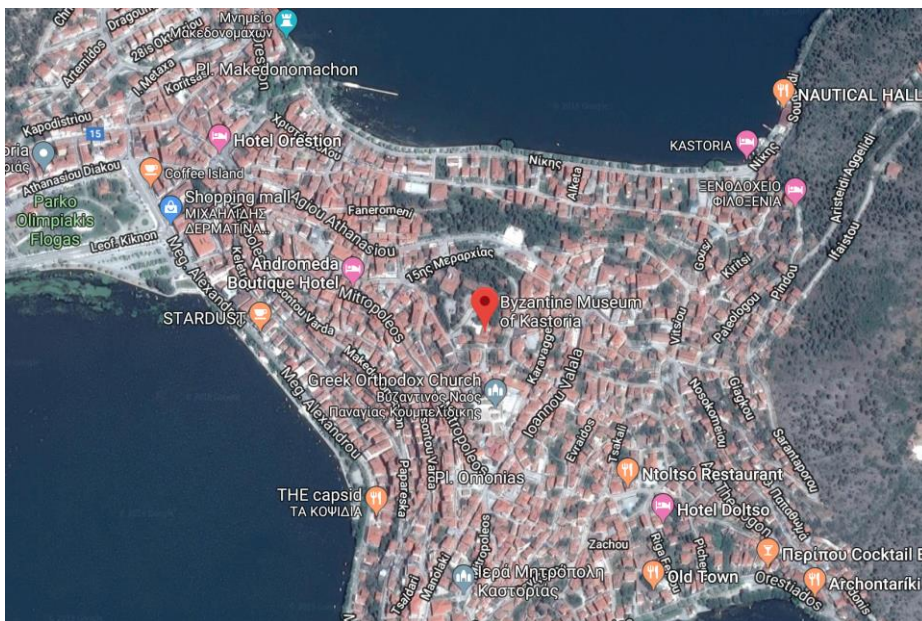
iii)Improvements

Although generally impressed with the museum's organization, interesting exhibits and the friendly staff, I would say that for future reference, and once tourism starts increasing in Kastoria, the museum will need the following:

- a concession stand offering visitors condiments and refreshments
- a small interactive screen room, complete with television screens or computers, (playing documentaries for example on i.e. “The lake's habitat”, or “Sweet water fish”) for young visitor's entertainment
- an improved outdoor parking area so that future visitors don't have to park their vehicles on the street nor block the museum's main entrance
- a wheelchair access point
- an independent website run by the curators of the museum and constantly updated
- an indoor/outdoor monitoring system to ensure for the safety of the tourists, the species on exhibit and the museum premises in general.

-The Byzantine Museum (Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Καστοριάς)

2.4



i) Directions

The newly renovated and expanded Byzantine Museum of Kastoria (Βυζαντινό Μουσείο Καστοριάς; see image 2.4) is located centrally on Dexamenis Square (Πλατεία Δεξαμενής). As one is entering the city from Grammou Avenue (Λεωφόρος Γράμμου) veer right at the end of Grammou Av. onto

Kolokotroni Street (Οδός Κωλοκοτρήνη) which will eventually lead you to Davaki Square (Πλατεία Δαβάκη). Veer right at Davaki Square onto Mitropoleos Street (Οδός Μητροπόλεως) and drive up the hill. Turn left on Vasileos Konstantinou Street (Οδός Βασιλέως Κωνσταντίνου) and then right again on Ioannou Siomou Street (Οδός Ιωάννου Σιώμου). The museum is located on the small square at the end of Ioannou Siomou street on the left.

ii) At the museum

A must see for visitors. It is a brilliant museum from many aspects, it was completely renovated recently and expanded by two more exhibition rooms (three in total). The museum boasts an incredible collection of early and latter Byzantine (mostly religious) icons, as well as icons painted by northern Greek religious painters during the Ottoman years of Kastoria. It is extremely clean, and organized with a modern perspective to it, providing adequate information about the city's Byzantine (and to some extent Ottoman) past, to visitors in Greek and English alike. The museum is open daily from **8:30 am** to **3:30 pm**, except on Tuesdays when it is closed to the public. For more information, please visit the museum website (www.bmk.gr) or contact via telephone at **24670-26781**.

iii) Improvements

→ A concession stand (or a small cafe for that matter) could be added on to the museum

in the future years when tourism in Kastoria expands and increases.

→ An organized parking space should be created in front of the museum, so visitors don't have to randomly park their vehicles anywhere on Dexamenis Square.

→ A gift shop or small library should most definitely be added on to the museum. It is mandatory that guests and tourists be able to purchase some memorabilia after they have departed from the exhibition rooms and are about to exit the museum building.

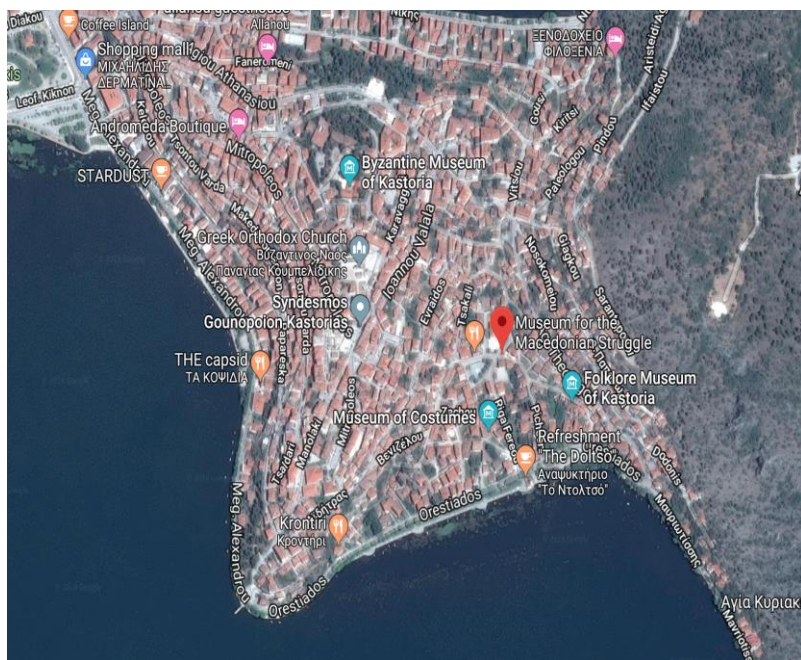
→ A monitoring system should be placed both within the museum as well as outside of the museum for security purposes.

→ Start promoting the museum globally and commence exchange programs with other museums abroad.

-The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle (Μουσείο Μακεδονικού Αγώνα)-

i)Directions

2.5



The Museum of the Macedonian Struggle (Μουσείο Μακεδονικού Αγώνα; see image 2.5) is in the Picheon mansion (Αρχοντικό Πηγεών) right next to Doltso Square (Πλατεία Ντολτσό) in the heart of the Old Town of Kastoria. In order to get there, I would advise tourists to park their vehicles in the designated parking spots along the lakeshore Orestiados street (Οδός Ορεστιάδος) and avoid driving in the small, narrow, stone-paved alleys that make up the Old Town as parking is extremely limited. From there, tourists can easily walk to the

museum either via Vyzantiou Street (Οδός Βυζαντίου), Riga Ferraiou Street (Οδός Ρήγα Φερραίου), both which will lead to Doltso Square, next to which the museum is located or simply Picheon Street (Οδός Πηγεών) which will lead directly in front of the museum entrance. All three paths are easy to follow without getting lost, and the museum is clearly noticeable within the old town of Doltso while street markings of its location can be seen everywhere.

ii) At the Museum

Multiple historic artifacts dating back to the days of the Macedonian Struggle as far back as 1904, can be found on display at this wonderful museum. Letters from soldiers to loved ones, pictures of Macedonian freedom fighters, books, documents, attire and even weapons used during battles can be seen by visitors who wish to gain a little in-depth knowledge of the glorious past of this region of Greece and the efforts of men and women alike, to unite the region of Macedonia with the rest of the modern Greek state. The museum consists of two floors within the Picheon Mansion. Both floors have exhibition rooms with historic artifacts on display, while the ground floor, just as one enters the museum from the main entrance, also houses a collection of multiple historic books, not solely about the Macedonian Struggle of 1904-1908, but from the history of the city of Kastoria as a whole. These books may be purchased by visitors at very reasonable prices. In general, the museum is very clean, organized and the staff at the museum are very helpful providing adequate information and instructions in both Greek and English for those seeking extra help or clarification. All artifacts on display are accompanied by informational plaques in both Greek and English. The museum is open daily (**Tu-Sa**) from **9:30 am to 2 pm**, on **Sundays** from **11 am to 3:30 pm**. On **Mondays** the Museum is closed to the public. The museum does not have a website, however, should anyone wish to acquire more information, they can contact the museum via telephone (during working hours) at: **24670-21144**.

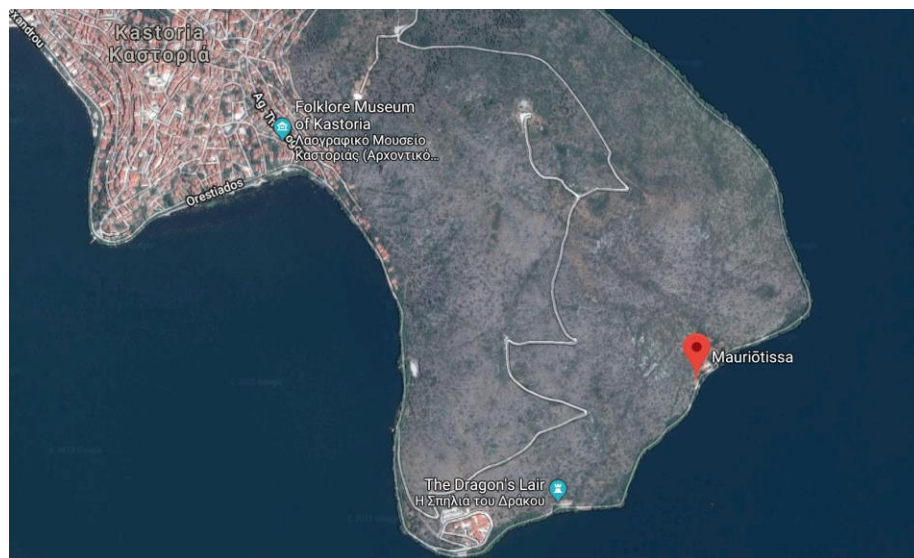
iii) Improvements

- Creation of a website for the museum, that will be updated daily, informing the public of activities and or new artifacts on display.
- Refreshments area for tourists/ gift-souvenir shop (a small room in the mansion can be transformed into a small, cozy rest area for tourists after they have completed their museum visit and can also serve as a gift shop for those who wish to purchase memorabilia).
- Handicapped access points within the museum as well as at the museum's entrance.

-Walking Tour of Lake Orestias and Mavriotissa Church (Γυρολιμνιά/ Ιερά Μονή Παναγίας Μαυριώτισσας)

2.6

i) Directions



The incredibly beautiful Mavriotissa Church (see image 2.6) is located on the tip of the peninsula that juts into Orestias lake. It can be accessed by car, from the southern shore of the city (Νότια Παραλία) taking Mavriotissis Street (Οδός Μαυριωτίσσης) all the way around the lake shore drive until it turns into

Sougarridi Street (Οδός Σουγγαρίδη). The church is located after the Public Hospital of Kastoria and the Dragon's Cave at approximately 5 km. from the city center. Road signs along the lake shore drive, clearly indicate the location of the church on the northernmost tip of the peninsula.

ii) At the church/ The “Girolimnia”

The church was built during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, in 1082 and to this day remains one of the oldest, best preserved Byzantine monuments and religious centers of the city (*Ninopoulou 2018*). Incredible wall frescoes decorate the interior of the church, while its beautiful wood carvings remain relatively intact to this day. Right next to the church there is a small gift shop for those wishing to purchase some memorabilia or religious items. There used to be a cafe-restaurant next to the church of Mavriotissa, but it has been closed now for nearly a decade.

Apart from the beautiful church itself, the drive along the lake shore road that encircles the Kastoria peninsula, is a MUST-DO for anyone visiting the city. Although a car drive is highly advisable, some people may prefer to walk along the road. The total distance of walking around the peninsula from the city's southern shore to the northern shore, is approximately one hour and thirty minutes (8-10 km), while multiple small Byzantine churches can be seen scattered here and there alongside the road. The idyllic scenery of the lake in combination with the incredible beauty of the surrounding natural environment make this lake tour, one of the most beautiful ones Europe has to offer. The locals call this walking/driving tour around the peninsula “Girolimnia” (or the “Lake

encirclement”) and it is popular for those living in Kastoria to walk around the peninsula's lake shore drive for an evening run or a relaxing evening exercise walk.

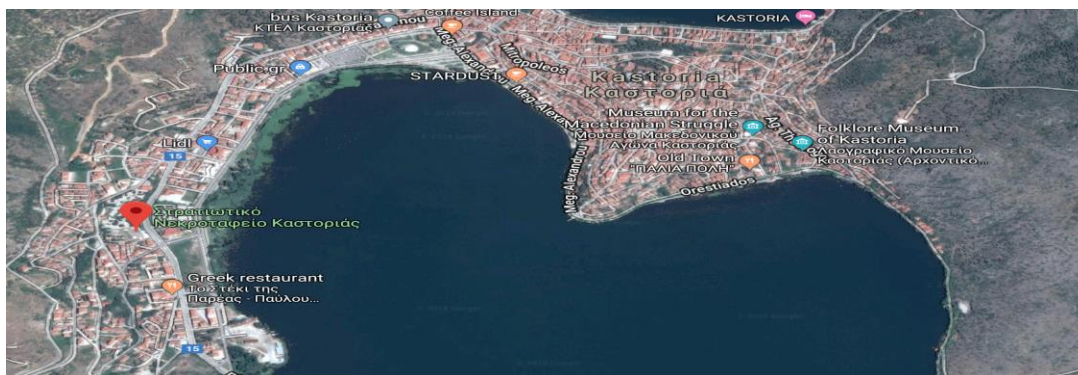
i)Improvements

→ **Small tourist Train conducting the lakeshore tour** (*Angelis, 2018, Petkanas 2018*)- Similar to the one in Como starting at the Piazza Cavour. Starting at a given point of interest (i.e. Doltso) should take tourists around the peninsula and should sporadically stop to drop off or pick up tourists at given points of interest (for example, the Dragon's Cave or Mavriotissa Church). The train can have a departure-arrival timetable so that the tourists wishing to use it to visit the locations around the lake can know precisely at what time the train arrives, and/or departs from each designated stop. It is something that I have heard many people in Kastoria talk about recently but has yet to be put into effect by the local municipality. It is a **MANDATORY** that a train, or a lake tour boat or any other form of transportation (ie **bicycles** that can be rented to tourists) other than a car, provides tourists with the ability to take a tour around the lake (from the southern shore to the northern shore and vice versa) and visit the locations of interest like the ones mentioned above. Tickets can range from single rides, to all-day train rides, depending on what the visitor needs or wants during his/her stay.

→ Create a designated parking area near the church, so cars do not randomly park along the lake shore road, or in locations that may make it difficult for ongoing traffic to drive by and pedestrians to access the church itself (I have personally witnessed this happen at this location)

-The Greek Civil War Memorial and Cemetery (Μνημείο και Κοιμητήριο Εμφυλίου Πολέμου)

2.7



i)Directions

The Greek Civil War Memorial and Military Cemetery (see image 2.7) is located on Grammou Avenue, exactly opposite the Municipal Aquarium. As one

is entering Kastoria by car, via the Kastoria-Grevena National Road (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών) from Dispilio, at the intersection of Kiknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων) and Grammou Avenue (Λεωφόρος Γράμμου), merge slightly left onto Grammou Avenue and head towards the city center. The Greek Civil War Memorial and Military

Cemetery is located on your left right across from the Municipal Aquarium and just before the Kastoria Traffic Park, directly after the intersection of Grammou Avenue and Zalongou Street.

ii) At the Memorial/Cemetery

The Kastoria Greek Civil War Memorial and Military Cemetery houses the remains of the Greek soldiers who fought and died during the Greek Civil War of 1946-1949. Hundreds of soldiers who gave their lives for Greece, fighting in the nearby mountain ranges of Grammos and Vitsi are buried in this awe-inspiring location where the past meets with the present, to inspire and inform. Another must-see for anyone visiting Kastoria, wishing to know more of the horrendous Civil War that divided Greece for years just after World War II, and the destructive battles that took place in the mountains around Kastoria that lead to the deaths of tens of thousands of soldiers and Greek civilians.

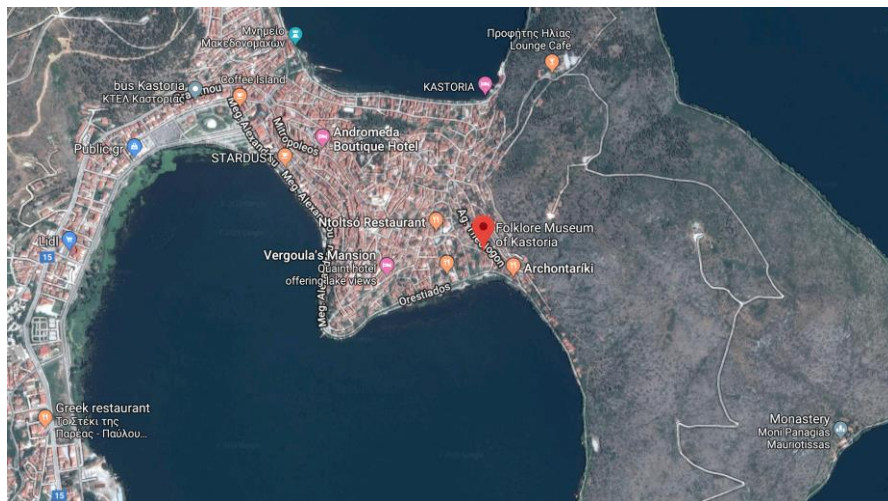
iii) Improvements

- The Civil War Memorial should be in taken care of and maintained daily, as a token of respect for the brave men who have been buried there. Greenery and beautiful flowers should be spread out along the entire memorial, and every tomb stone should be taken care of by an appointed municipal worker, whose sole duty will be to preserve the Cemetery and Memorial and keep it constantly, 24-7 in excellent shape. There is absolutely no excuse for which this memorial should lack in anything at all. Everything from the entrance to the surrounding walls of this landmark, should be in perfect condition.
- Directions and informative instructions should be provided to the visitors of the memorial in English, not just Greek. The erecting of a larger monument or statue in commemoration of the men who fought and died in Kastoria during the 1946-1949 Civil War needs to be placed in a central area of the grounds, to attract tourist attention and signify the importance of this specific location.
- A designated and organized parking area (including spots for the handicapped) should be created directly in front of the cemetery/memorial grounds to make it easily accessible to tourists and locals alike.
- The sidewalks leading up to the entrance of the Greek Civil War Memorial and Military Cemetery should always be immaculate and perfectly paved.
- Public toilets should also be created on the premises.

-The Kastoria Folklore Museum (Λαογραφικό Μουσείο Καστοριάς)

i) Directions

2.8



The Kastoria Folklore Museum (Λαογραφικό Μουσείο Καστοριάς; see image 2.8) is also located in the Doltso (Ντολτσό), or the “old town” district of Kastoria near the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle (Μουσείο Μακεδονικού Αγώνα) approximately one hundred meters south of the Museum of Macedonian

Struggle. The museum is located at number 10 Kapetan Lazou Street (Οδός Καπετάν Λάζου) which forms off Piheon Street (Οδός Πηχέων) where the Museum of Macedonian Struggle is located. The museum can easily be approached from the main Lakeshore Orestiadou Street (Οδός Ορεστιάδος) to which it runs to directly horizontally right after Piheon Street (Οδός Πηχέων). As with any other locations visited within the Doltso area it is highly advised that vehicles are parked in the designated parking spaces by the lake. The Folklore Museum of Kastoria is located within the beautiful Nerantzes Aivazes mansion (Αρχοντικό Νεραντζή Αιβάζη) which is one of the best preserved and elaborate eighteenth century mansions of Kastoria.

ii) At the Museum

The Kastoria Folklore Museum is a very adequate representation of the living conditions in eighteenth and nineteenth century Doltso. The enormous Nerantzes Aivazes mansion which was built in the late eighteenth century by a wealthy fur trader has been completely renovated and since 1975 served as the folklore museum. The mansion is comprising of two floors and a walled-off exterior garden which was a common characteristic of many mansions built at the time. Each room features a different aspect of life in eighteenth to early nineteenth century Kastoria, and the house mansion itself features multiple bedrooms, including one master bedroom, a sewing room, a men's living room, a dining room, a large main entrance hall used to greet guests as well as a large sitting area used by the owner of the house as a conversational area when he would invite important guests over to his house. The ground floor features a wine cellar, a food cellar and other smaller areas where the bread would be baked and where wood and other

materials would be stored for the winter. Every room is beautifully maintained, amazing tapestries and paintings adorn the walls as well as stained-glass windows in the main hall and many of the everyday objects used back then by the tenants of the house can still be found throughout this extraordinary museum. It provides the guest with a very holistic understanding of what life was like in Kastoria more than three hundred years ago. Museum hours are from **Monday to Sunday: 10 am to 5 pm, except Tuesdays** when the museum remains closed. For more information feel free to contact the museum staff during hours of operation via the museum telephone number: **24670-28603**.

iii)Improvements

- Creation of a mini gift shop for tourists to purchase memorabilia from their visit to this museum. The gift shop could even be in the walled garden of the mansion, just as one enters and exits the mansion's property.
- Creation of a refreshment/snack stand or at least the use of vending machines if lack of space is a problem.
- Possible use of more optoacoustic imaging throughout the museum (in Greek and English)
- Creation of an official museum website updated regularly and including all necessary information about the Folklore Museum of Kastoria for tourists and local visitors (location, history, important artifacts on display, hours of operation, other interesting facts etc.).
- Make it easily accessible for handicapped persons.

-Hotels/ Bed & Breakfasts

Luckily, despite a decrease in its population and visitors, mainly from abroad as Kastoria's main influx of tourists are local Greeks (*Vlami, Tsamos, Zacharatos 2012*) one thing Kastoria does not lack in, is the number of hotels that it has either in the city-center or nearby suburbs, although their number has decreased along with along with the interest in building or modernizing specialized tourist infrastructure facilities (*Vlami, Tsamos, Zacharatos 2012*). From exquisite traditional bed and breakfast mansions, to grand five-star resorts, to nice, cozy and highly affordable lodgings, Kastoria offers more than three thousand rooms for its potential visitors (unlike any other town of its size in northern Greece). (*Kastoria & Tourism Seminar 2018*) Despite the number of rooms however, Kastorian hotels rarely reach their full capacity. The hotels were built at a time when Kastorian entrepreneurs, looking into the booming fur industry of the late eighties and early nineties anticipated that Kastoria would eventually become a European center for fur trade (*Angelis 2018*). At the turn of the millennium things changed dramatically for the worst and today most of these hotels barely manage to sustain themselves (especially in the last years of the Greek recession) (*Samarini P, Samarini R.2019*).

For these hotels to attract tourists, both foreign and domestic and increase their check-in rates on a monthly basis, they must follow a series of steps that were all presented at the Kastoria & Tourism Seminar which occurred in October 2018 and which I was able to attend (*Kastoria & Tourism Seminar*):

→ Create a joint hotel union that will meet on weekly and/or monthly basis and come up with a series of tourist friendly measures that will attract more and more people. The union will follow a hierarchical structure with elections being held at a given duration of time, appointing a hierarchy in charge of its activities and obligations based on a set of laws that will define its structure and means of operation.

→ There must be a clear and strictly defined relationship between the hotel union (hotel owners) and the local authorities creating a solid relationship of mutual trust and understanding.

→ Advance their marketing techniques. This could be done either via a training seminar/program held by the union or by local authority and could be accompanied by further training of hotel staff in the new means of “self-promotion” to the global society. The hotels must be able to effectively compete in the global market they wish to penetrate.

→ Attend global/international hotel meetings to further train, understand new concepts in proper and efficient hotel management and furthermore in order to promote their hotels at a much larger scale.

Mentioned directly below are all hotels/ bed & breakfasts located in the greater Kastoria metropolitan area, divided in categories according to their location (town center/suburbs):

Kastoria City Center

1. **Hotel Anesis (**)** Grammou 10, Kastoria 52100 (tel# 24670-83-908)
2. **Hotel Orestion (**)** Davaki 1, Kastoria 52100 (tel# 24670-222-57)
3. **Europa Hotel (****)** Agiou Athanasiou 12, Kastoria 52100 (tel # 24670-23826)
4. **Andromeda Boutique Hotel (****)** Mitropoleos 33, Kastoria 52100 (tel # 24670-222-20)
5. **Allahou (****)** Panagias Fanaromenis 18, Kastoria 52100 (tel # 24670-270-58)
6. **Idiston Rooms and Suites (***)** Megalou Alexandrou 91, Kastoria 52100 (tel # 24670-222-50)
7. **Paralimnio (***)** Leoforos Kiknon 34, Kastoria 52100 (tel #24670-826-26)

Kastoria Old Town (Doltso & Apozari Districts)

1. **Kastoria Hotel-Apozari (***) Leoforos Nikis 122, Kastoria 52100 (tel #24670-29453)**
2. **Philoxenia- Apozari Paleologou, Kastoria 52100 (tel#24670-22162)**
3. **Venetula's Mansion Bed & Breakfast- Doltso Agion Theologon 6, Kastoria 52100 (tel# 24670-22446)**
4. **Orologopoulos Mansion Luxury Hotel (*****)- Doltso Platia Doltso Piheon 1, Kastoria 52100 (tel# 24670-21604)**
5. **Hotel Doltso (****)-Doltso Riga Fereu 5 Kastoria, 52100 (tel#24670-22022)**
6. **Archontiko Alexiou Vergoula (***)- Doltso Editras, Kastoria 52001 (tel# 24670-23415)**

Hloi (suburb)

1. **Kyknos De Luxe Suites Hotel (***) Apodimon Kastorianon, Kastoria 52100(tel#24670-28700)**
2. **Fountoukli (***) Andrea Papandreou, Kastoria 52100 (tel# 24670-26884)**
3. **Esperos Palace Luxury & Spa Hotel (****) Fountoukli, Kastoria 52001 (tel#24670-24670)**
4. **Chloe Hotel (***) Antheon & Giasemion, Kastoria 52100 (tel#24670-21300)**
5. **Pansion Zafiriou Hloi, Kastoria 52100 (tel#24670-28893)**
6. **Calma Hotel & Spa (****) 3rd km. Kastoria-Vitsi National Road, Kastoria 52001 (tel# 24670-22215)**

Maniaki (suburb)

1. **Nostos Hotel (****) Nea Lefki, Kastoria 52100 (tel# 24670-81888)**
2. **Diamond River Resort & Spa (****) Armenohoriou 23, Kastoria 52100 (tel#24670-81200)**
3. **Elanthi Hostel 4th side road on Emmanouil Pappa Str., Kastoria 52100 (tel# 24670-82885)**

Dispilio (suburb)-including hotels on Kastoria-Grevena National Road

1. **Village Niades, Makedni Kastoria, 52057 (tel# 24670-85721)**
2. **Villa del Lago (****), Kastoria 52057 (tel# 24670-85818)**
3. **Dimitra Guest House Agiou Nikolaou 28, Kastoria 52057 (tel#24670-85721)**
4. **Limneon Resort & Spa (*****) 4th km Kastoria-Grevena National Road, Kastoria 52057 (tel#24670-85111)**
5. **Hotel Tsamis (***) 4th km Kastoria-Grevena National Road, Kastoria 52057 (tel#24670-85334)**
6. **Hotel Anastassiou (**) Kastoria-Grevena National Road, Kastoria 52100 (tel#24670-86886)**

-Public Transportation

-The local bus system (Αστικό ΚΤΕΛ Καστοριάς)

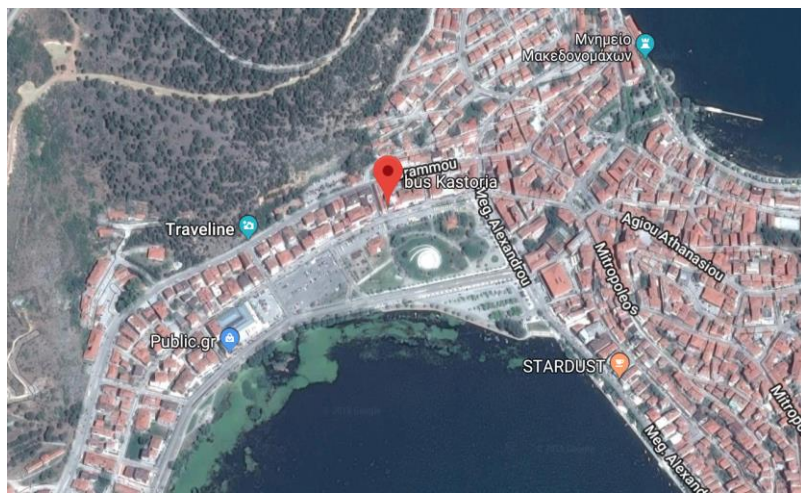
The only means of public transportation that the town of Kastoria has to offer is the local bus system (Αστικό ΚΤΕΛ Καστοριάς). (*Papantina 2019*) The local bus routes connect the town center with: **a)** its surrounding suburbs (Maniaki/The Technical Institute of Western Macedonia, Dispilio and Hloi/The project buildings) or **b)** nearby towns and villages (Mesopotamia, Argos Orestiko and others). (<http://astikoktelkastorias.gr/>)

They operate daily Monday through Sunday, although on the weekends most bus routes follow a different timetable. Bus routes to and from Aristoteles airport are very rare and occur occasionally on the day of flight departures and arrivals. Sadly, the entire town is not effectively covered by the local bus routes and I would not suggest anyone using the local buses in order to be able to reach a desired attraction or generally, a point of interest. Bus stops are widely spread out. The entire system is very confusing and instructions in English-if any- would be extremely limited. The buses are also very outdated and do not provide the comfort that any local bus system in any other European city would. The road network is horrendous despite the limited size of the city, making it very difficult for buses to maneuver in and around the town center.

The main local bus pick-up/ departure area is adjacent to the eastern end of the Platia Olimpiakis Flogas (Πλατεία Ολυμπιακής Φλόγας). Bus routes to and from certain suburbs and/or nearby towns typically start at around 6:45 am and the last bus route leaves the main departure area at 22:00 pm. A 24/7 taxi stand is located right next to the local bus main departure area. (<http://astikoktelkastorias.gr/>)

-The intercity bus system (Υπεραστικό ΚΤΕΛ)

2.9



In order for someone to reach Kastoria (either than via the Aristoteles Airport which offers limited flights to and from Athens), the only other way to arrive to the city is either by car or with the intercity bus system, connecting Kastoria with main hubs like Athens and Thessaloniki, or with smaller towns in the Macedonian and Epirus prefectures like Amynteo, Kozani and Ioannina on a

narrower basis of the daily schedule. The bus terminal (see image 2.9) is stationed in the

ground floor of an outdated apartment building no larger than 100 m², located in the city center on 14 Athanasiou Diakou Str. (Οδός Αθανασίου Διάκου 14). It is approximately 500 meters past the Kastoria Mall (Εμπορικό Κέντρο Καστοριάς) on your left, as you enter the city from the south on Kyknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων) right next to the Parko/Platia Olimpiakis Flogas (Πάρκο/Πλατεία Ολυμπιακής Φλόγας).

Thessaloniki (Θεσσαλονίκη) is located approximately 222 km. directly east of Kastoria and the duration of the journey with the intercity bus is approximately 2 hrs. and 30 mins (with some stops along the way in the Kastoria prefecture). Athens (Αθήνα) is located approximately 564 km. southeast of Kastoria, and the duration of the bus ride is approximately 6 hrs. in total. The buses are modern, fully equipped with all necessary amenities that a passenger requires to have a safe and relaxing journey. I highly suggest using this means of transportation should you wish to travel from Athens-Thessaloniki to Kastoria and vice versa and are looking for a means of transportation other than by car or airplane. The recent post-2004 construction of main highways (like highways A5 and E/90 A/2) linking Western Macedonia (Kastoria) to the larger metropolitan areas of Thessaloniki and Athens, make bus travel that much safer, quicker and easier. (<https://www.ktel-kastorias.gr>)

My opinion, regarding the outdated facilities of the main bus depot, is that it should most definitely be moved outside of the town center, into a new, modern and easily accessible independent building. A local bus route can connect the new depot with the town center, and a new taxi stand can be created outside to serve those who wish to choose an alternative and faster means of transportation to and from the town. The new bus depot should follow all modern European standards, offering locals and tourists the opportunity to shop in small stores inside the depot, enjoy beverages and snacks before departing for a destination, and of course should offer all other amenities like organized and clean bathrooms and waiting rooms adjacent to the bus platforms. A bus platform/s must also be created to ensure easy and comfortable parking and overnight stationing for all buses. A parking area for all local vehicles should also be created adjacent to the new depot building so as a passenger can easily access the building area by car and park his/her vehicle before entering.

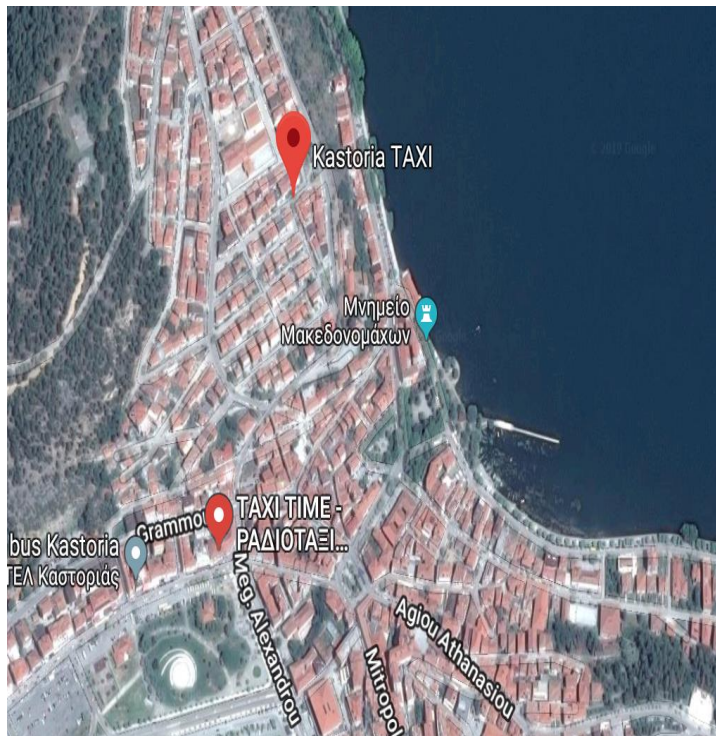
I believe that a perfect location to create the new bus terminal would either be somewhere on the local Kastoria-Grevena highway (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών) linking Kastoria with its suburb of Dispilio (Δισπηλιό) near the lakeside hotels and fur exposition centers, or somewhere along Kiknon Avenue (Λεωφόρος Κύκνων) as one enters the town from the south, near to or adjacent to the Aquarium building. It is mandatory that something like this happens as soon as possible for two very important reasons:

- i) To ensure a safe and easy access point for all passenger buses arriving and departing Kastoria,
- ii) In order to lessen the traffic issues that may be created within the town center and Athanasiou Diakou Street, should the number of buses arriving and departing increases

within the next years. The distance of both possible locations mentioned above, from the town center is no more than approximately 1-3 km in total.

-Taxi (Τάξι)

2.10



Yet another alternative means of transportation within town limits is the taxi (see image 2.10). Taxis in Kastoria are of yellow color and one can see them stationed in one of two locations throughout the town. The main taxi stand is located on 4 Athanasiou Diakou Street (Αθανασίου Διάκου 4), right next to the intercity bus station on the northwest corner of the Platia Olimpiakis Flogas (Πλατεία Ολυμπιακής Φλόγας). Another area where one can find taxis in Kastoria is right next to Platia Irinis- Van Fleet Square (Πλατεία Ειρήνης/Βαν Φλητ) near the northern lakefront and close to Makedonomahon Square (Πλατεία Μακεδονομάχων). Taxi fares are relatively cheap and will not surpass 5-

7 euros within the Kastoria metropolitan area limits (including the suburbs of Maniaki, Dispilio and Hloi). They operate 24/7, so anyone returning home after a late night out can always use a taxi to get quickly and safely to his/her destination at a low cost.

-Kastoria and Tourism Seminar (Καστοριά και Τουρισμός)

Tsamis Hotel

During my third visit to Kastoria, I had the opportunity to sit and evaluate a Tourism seminar for the public, organized in Kastoria, by former New Democracy member of Parliament Mp. Zisis Tzikalagias. The seminar, which lasted for approximately three hours in total, took place in the Tsamis Hotel, located just outside the city-center, on the National Road between Kastoria and neighboring Dispilio. The organization and general structure of the procedure, I found to be very effective. The conference room was large enough for a professional meeting of this sort, a pre-conference refreshment stand was situated just outside the room, and the whole process was characterized by a notion of professionalism that one rarely sees in Greece. The only area that I feel the seminar lacked in, was its adequate promotion. I was informed about the seminar and had trouble finding

it on social media when I looked for it.

The seminar was structured around three speeches and the introductory/ welcoming speeches by Mr. Tzikalagias and Mr Iordanis Michaelides-president of the Kastoria Hotels Union. Each one of the keynote speakers focused on a specific area of his educational/ professional background, each focusing indistinctly on Kastorian tourism and its potentials. The seminar was split between three speakers.

→The first speaker, Mr. Panos Tsolakis, professor and lecturer at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, discussed the history of Kastoria and focused on certain monuments and/or areas of the city with significant historic importance and of genuine interest. He formulated his speech around the potential of religious tourism in the area.

→Mr. George Pismiris, a police officer and outdoor/nature sports specialist, who talked about the natural benefits of the Kastoria prefecture and all it has to offer a nature-seeking tourist like extreme-nature sports, lake canoeing and kayaking, hiking and mountain climbing. Mr. Pismiris was adamant about the creation of the proper infrastructure and the appointment of trained specialists that could support such athletic events within Kastoria's natural environment.

→Mr. Constantine Dimitriadis who provided the audience with general as well as specific numbers and data concerning Kastoria's current status when it comes to local and international tourism. A Q&A process of about thirty minutes followed.

I was very pleased, not only being there, but also meeting some of the keynote speakers in person, with whom I had the opportunity to discuss about my project and gain some extra information for the all-year-round tourism section of my paper. The audience was for the most part respective of the speakers and must have surpassed two hundred and fifty people in total. One thing I did notice, was increased tension between hotel owners and the local authorities who were represented there by Kastoria's current mayor Mr. Anestis Angelis. The talks and often severe debate between the mayor and a small group of hotel owners from Kastoria, forced some of the latter to depart the conference room prior to the seminar's conclusion. The reason for this minor incident, was that a group of hotel owners, that went to hear the speech, seemed to have been offended when the mayor talked about the help (I would assume, economic for the most part) that local authorities have provided in granting assistance towards hotel facilities and tourist attraction methods in general, something that the hotel owners evidently denied.

I felt that the seminar, was a like a “breath of fresh air” to the city of Kastoria, which is why it had such a positive turnout, not solely by entrepreneurs focused on tourism, but by the general populace of the city as well, including many youths. Seminars like this, no matter their outcome, provide a clear and effective means of tackling local municipal issues, and help rise debates that, in the long run, can prove important when analyzing the steps that need to be taken in order to focus on an issue as important as tourism in a city that has been hit hard by the economic crisis and needs to focus on other areas of economic gains, other than the fur industry and its tragic mistakes of the past.

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is yet another branch of tourism that Kastoria has the capacity to cultivate. According to authors Poria and Ashworth, heritage tourism is the experience of spaces that present tangible and intangible elements perceived by the visitors to be a part of their own personal heritage. *(Ashworth, Poria 2009)* Furthermore, “*In terms of demand, heritage tourism is representative of many contemporary visitors' desire (hereafter, tourists) to directly experience and consume diverse past and present cultural landscapes, performances, foods, handicrafts, and participatory activities*” as expressed by Chhabra, Healy and Sills in their analysis ‘*Staged authenticity and heritage tourism*’. *(Chhabra, Healy & Sills 2003)*.

Kastoria is a city that has a very rich and multi-cultural background. Historically, for hundreds if not thousands of years, it has been a melting pot of different civilizations coming together each imprinting part of their own identity on the modern-day city. *(Makris 2008)* The Byzantines, the Ottomans, the Jews all left something of their own (good or bad) to this magnificent city that many would love to explore. Kastoria is not the only Greek city to possess such desired features- a fusion of east and west coming together in food, religion and architecture. *(Makris 2008)* All of Greece has characteristics of some other culture or ethnicity that once inhabited (or conquered) a certain region of the country and left their “stigma” behind. It is highly important therefore, for the successful rise of tourism in any area in Greece, for that area (or town, village, city etc.) to create a tourist campaign that will attract tourists from countries that have some historic connection with these locations. *(Papantina, 2019)*

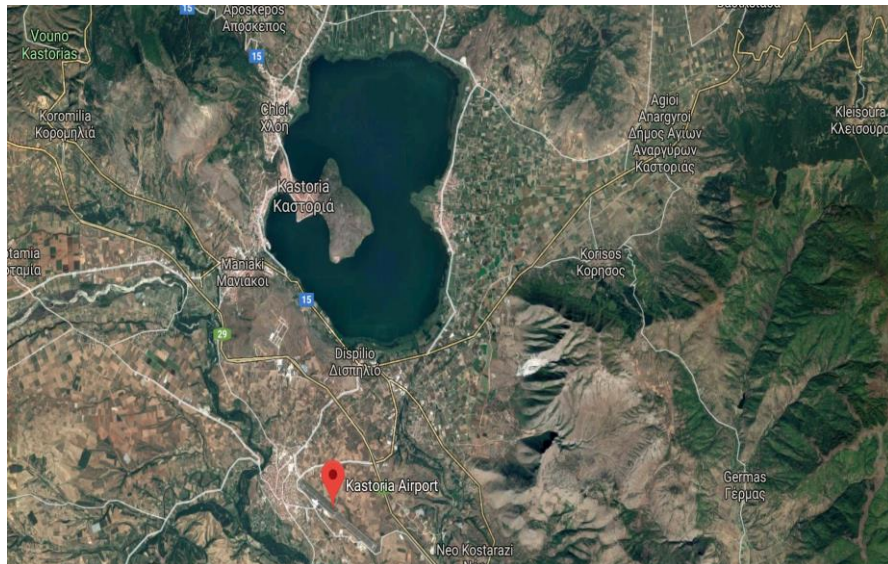
For example, Ioannina, a city built amphitheatrically around Pamvotida lake, larger than Kastoria, located in the region of Epirus southwest of the region of Western Macedonia, has seen an immense increase in foreign visitors from Israel and Turkey. Using an aggressive and very organized campaign to promote their Jewish and Ottoman historic past, the people of Ioannina have managed to gain fervor from multiple Israelites and Turks that quite possibly, may had never heard of their city before. Due to architectural restorations and a historic/cultural campaign they have managed to make their city recognizable and adaptable to Turks and Israelites who may have had ancestors who once lived there during the Ottoman era.

A recent refurbishment and expansion of the “King Pyrrhus” International Airport of Ioannina that has been underway and is near completion, now allows for larger charter flights from Israel and Turkey to arrive in Ioannina boosting their local economy to a great extent all year round. The well-maintained Ottoman era buildings in Ioannina (the house of Ali Pasha, the Its Kale acropolis fortress, the Ottoman library, the Ottoman bathhouse, multiple large mosques etc., the Cavalry Academy of Ali Pasha) all of which I have visited, as well as the Jewish quarter in the Old Town are some only of the main attractions that people from Turkey and Israel are rushing to visit and explore. Kastoria could be at that level of developing heritage tourism as well and could be reaping the benefits.

Kastoria can and should aim at promoting itself as a tourist destination at certain specific foreign markets (*Papantina 2019*) just like Ioannina has recently done.

V) THE ARISTOTELES NATIONAL AIRPORT OF KASTORIA

3.1

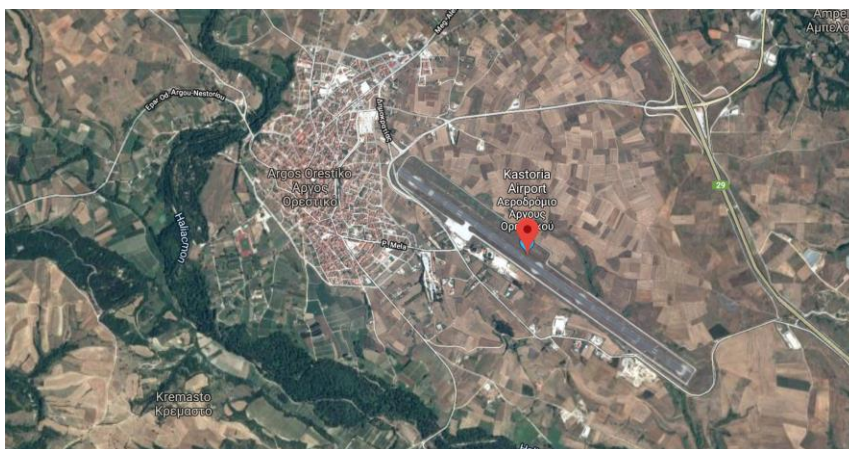


Kastoria's “Aristoteles” National Airport (KSO) (Κρατικός Αερολιμένας Καστοριάς “Αριστοτέλης”; see images 3.1, 3.2) is located in the outskirts of the town of Argos Orestiko, 12.6 kilometers directly south of Kastoria's town center. It does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Kastoria, but that of Argos Orestiko (Άργος Ορεστικό) and the

Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority (Υπηρεσία Πολιτικής Αεροπορίας). (*Danou 2002*) It does however serve the entire prefecture with sporadic flights to Athens (Eleftherios Venizelos Intl. Airport-ATH) served by low-cost air carrier “Astra Airlines” on certain days of the week. (*Darlagiannis, 2018*)

3.2

The benefits of having an airport near the town center are immense and if used and developed properly, the airport can prove to be of paramount importance not solely to the town of Kastoria but to the prefecture in general. An airport automatically creates a gateway to multiple destinations, foreign and domestic, while simultaneously offers an alternative means of travel to local citizens, and/or visitors. This small airport in



turn can boost the local economy to great proportions. (*Button, Doh, Yuan 2010*) It will put Kastoria on the local, but more importantly international map of travel, leisure and business, making it a very attractive destination to visitors.

Aristoteles airport, along with other public infrastructure facilities that were constructed in the Kastoria prefecture over the past three decades (in a reckless attempt to boost the local economy), remains one of Europe's negative “ghost airports” list (together with other European airports in Estonia, Italy and Spain). (<https://euobserver.com/justice/126948>) Money is going in (or has been going in) but the end result is saddening. The European Union invested a total of € 5 million in the past decade, to reconstruct the airport's main and sole runway (runway 12/30). (<https://www.euractiv.com/section/regional-policy/news/eu-millions-wasted-on-white-elephant-airports-say-auditors/>) Not much has happened since then. The airport remains extremely outdated and cannot in any way compare itself to other local European airports of its size and potential capacity. Passenger numbers are decreasing rapidly, and flights are not even a daily phenomenon anymore. (*Darlagiannis 2018*)

Meanwhile European taxpayers are complaining that their money is being spent on “dead projects”. They have every right to be upset. Over a seven-year period, based on a report conducted by the European Union, the airport's costs exceeded € 7.7 million while its total revenue did not surpass €176.000 in total. Furthermore, the refurbished runway has never been used for the types of aircraft it was initially supposed to serve. (<https://www.euractiv.com/section/regional-policy/news/eu-millions-wasted-on-white-elephant-airports-say-auditors/>)

As author Marcin Bogdanski mentions in his thesis ‘*Airports as a factor of regional development on the example of the Szymany Airport*’, since air travel accounts for about 4% of the European Union’s annual GDP, there should be more direct funding of airport facilities, especially in underfinanced regions (like Kastoria or Szymany, Poland for that matter). An airport is not just about the passengers that arrive and depart from them. Modern airports, according to the author, whether big or small, encompass multiple other activities and functions within them that can generate income. Jobs are automatically created and multiple facets of the society to which the airport belongs to can generate wealth from its operations. Therefore, every airport in a region has immense direct and indirect effects on that region’s economy. Directly by offering jobs within the liturgical processes of the airport like maintenance workers, technicians, security staff, air control staff, shopping and dining staff, cleaning crews, medical staff, managers (it is believed that per one million passengers, ingoing and outgoing in every airport facility, approximately 950 airport staff are required). Indirectly by depending on external entities from a surrounding area for many of its operation functions and procedures like telecommunications, service operators, fuel suppliers, accountants etc. (*Bogdanski 2014*)

-Aristoteles Airport- General information

- **Airport Location:** 12 km from Kastoria. 500 m from Argos Orestiko
- **Total Building surface:** 1.000 m²
- **Geographical coordinates:** 40th parallel 27'00 N, 21st parallel 17'00 E.
- **Terminal building (1)**
- **Runways (1)**
- **Airplane positions on tarmac (2)**
- **Area for smaller planes:** 2.000 m²

(<http://www.ypa.gr/our-airports/kratikos-aerolimenas-kastorias-aristotelhs-kakta>)

Arriving at Aristoteles Airport- How to get there from Kastoria town center

One can arrive at the airport either directly from the town of Kastoria via the **Kastoria-Grevena National Road** (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών) traveling south, or via the **National Highway's Route 29** (Ε.Ο. 29).

→In order to get to the airport via the **Kastoria-Grevena National Road** (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών) from the town center, one must travel 7.2 km South to the suburb Dispilio (Δισπηλιό). When in Dispilio turn right on Ecostis Pemptis Martiou Street (Οδός 25ης Μαρτίου) and continue south for approximately 4 km on Ecostis Pemptis Martiou Street (Οδός 25ης Μαρτίου) which turns into Megalou Alexandrou Street (Οδός Μεγάλου Αλεξάνδρου). Just after entering the town of Argos Orestiko veer left on Demokratias Street (Οδός Δημοκρατίας) and at the next junction turn right to head towards the airport for approximately 1.5 km.

→In order to get to the airport from the town center of Kastoria, via **National Highway Route 29** (Αυτοκινητόδρομος 29) one must drive from Kastoria just south west past the suburb of Maniaki on the Suburban Road of Kastoria-Nestorio (Επαρχιακή Οδός Καστοριάς-Νεστορίου) to the Route 29 Exit of Kastoria South (approximately 5.2 km from town center) and veer left towards Siatista-Thessaloniki. From there travel south towards Siatista for approximately 8 km and get off at the next immediate exit towards Argos Orestiko. Stay on the road towards Argos past Demokratias street (Οδός Δημοκρατίας) on your right. The airport is located just 3.3 km west of the Argos Orestiko/ Kastoria South exit (Route 29).

-Aristoteles Airport Current Status

The airport is in a very bad condition to put it bluntly, both aesthetically and when it comes to its infrastructure and its facilities. Mr. George Darlagiannis, Director of the airport, stated during an extensive interview, that one of the main issues that Kastoria Airport is witnessing, is the inability of airline companies and fuel companies to come to an agreement. (*Darlagiannis 2018*) The airport does not have a fuel station, so airline companies cannot perform round-trip flights with intervals. In other words, the aircraft cannot be refueled and thus cannot use the airport as a temporary base. Astra airlines, as previously mentioned the only airline company currently flying in and out of Kastoria, from Athens, uses its ATR 42-300 aircraft (propeller, 40 persons seating capacity) in “touch and go” operations- meaning, passengers are dropped off, other passengers aboard the flight, and it immediately departs for Athens. Currently, the airport's tarmac can host up to two type B-737 aircraft and covers an area of approximately 2.000 m² which is nothing to put aside. In other words, it is not operating to its full potential and has not been for quite some time. (*Darlagiannis 2018*)

The fuel companies that would undertake such a large and costly project, state that they would consider funding the establishment of a refueling station on airport grounds as soon as airline companies start landing their planes there. Airline companies on the other hand, refuse to include Kastoria on their schedules unless a fuel station is created so they can refuel their inbound aircraft. According to Mr. Darlagiannis, “it is like a “ping-pong” game, one side throws the ball at the other side.” (*Darlagiannis 2018*) It's a lose-lose situation for Mr. Darlagiannis, who seems rather hopeless in the future of the airport. Meanwhile, passenger numbers are rapidly diminishing, and the airport is falling to pieces. For many people in Kastoria, it wouldn't be a surprise if the airport shuts down completely within the next year or so. (*Petkanas 2018*) Obviously this would prove to be detrimental, another negative blow to a city' whose pride (and economy) has already been hurt time in and time out over the past years.

The airport consists of one main hall for arrivals and departures, and another hall, adjacent to the one mentioned before, which belongs to the airport staff's offices, including that of the airport's director Mr. George Darlagiannis. The combined area of both halls is approximately 1000 m². (*Danou 2002*) Completely outdated spaces, not clean at all, the least bit organized, without information boards, luggage belts not operating, shopping areas (i.e. a duty free section), no place for passengers to buy food or drinks, and toilets that lack basic hygiene, a trip to this airport is literally a trip back to European airports in the 1960s and 1970s. Smoking is allowed inside amongst airport staff, many of whom do not speak a word of English..

The interior of the terminal building is not the only negative aspect of the airport. Once one arrives at the airport, he/she witnesses decay in all areas of the airport's exterior and surroundings. A drive down an outdated and seemingly abandoned country road which leads to the airport and ends at a small military base located right next to it.

The parking lot, rather large for the airport itself, is completely disorganized, no parking lanes whatsoever or adequate road signage. The greenery around the airport is also highly neglected. Paths of dirt and dried-out grass with some bushes and trees here and there is all one is going to see.

-Improvements that need to be made at Aristoteles

According to the European Union, one of the investment plans in northwestern Greece (**EIPP-20160085**), has to do with the Kastoria Airport. (<https://ec.europa.eu/eipp/desktop/el/projects/project-65.html>) Commencing works in January 2019, the airport is supposed to undergo a modernization project including: **a)** the expansion of the existing terminal building by 3.320 m² (total surface area 4.320 m²), **b)** the expansion of the aircraft parking tarmac to a total of 22.000 m²- including the configuration of ground transportation places and fuel areas, **c)** the construction of a new road connecting Kastoria and Argos Orestiko to the airport. The total cost of the project is believed to exceed €15 million. The proposed business model for the plan is that of a PPP. (<https://ec.europa.eu/eipp/desktop/el/projects/project-65.html>) The investors in the project will have the right to exploit the airport for a specific time period. The entire plan is thought to boost the local economy and increase competitiveness.

I agree with any European/ private intervention on the Kastoria Airport. I feel that it is, judging by the difficult economic position that the Kastoria prefecture is in at the current moment, the only way the airport can not only be salvaged, but modernized and expanded, becoming an attractive airport to both the locals as well as the foreign visitors.

Based on my analysis of Aristoteles airport and the discussion I had with Mr. Darlagiannis, the changes that need to be made to the Kastoria airport are the following:

-Interior Terminal Building (current size)

Modernization-improvement of the existing terminal building. Internal works to create a more passenger-friendly environment.

- Separation of Departures/Arrivals area.
- Creation of a small shopping/rest area for passengers in extra/intra-Schengen area of departures and/or within all-accessible area of airport (does not have to operate 24/7).
- Refurbishment of the existing toilets- Creating toilets in “Arrivals” and “Departures”.
- Adding LED TVs in all areas to ensure direct and easily accessible passenger notification- Creation of information desk (does not have to operate 24/7).
- Change of outdated/uncomfortable seating.
- Changes in lighting, improvements in cooling/heating systems.
- Improvement of internal speakers’ systems.
- Computer systems update and electronics software update.

- Security upgrade, private security (new item scanners, body scanners etc.)
- Installment of security cameras inside and outside the terminal.
- Replacement of luggage belts in arrivals area.
- Direct luggage transfer at check-in.
- Strictly forbid smoking and littering within terminal.
- Update medical station and other employee offices within the building.

-Exterior Terminal Building (current size)

- Repayment of parking area, and clear signage indicating parking spots, airport facilities etc.
- Replanting and constant maintenance of airport greenery.
- Maintenance of surrounding area (emphasis on garbage removal).
- Improvement of road connecting airport to nearby town of Argos Orestiko.
- Development and modernization of terminal building exterior.
- Creation of taxi area in parking lot.
- Creation of bus area in parking lot.
- 24/7 airport security.

-Future Airport Development project that need to be taken under consideration

- Complete Reconstruction of main airplane road (development of dividing sidewalk, streetlights for the entire road, traffic light in airport entrance for better traffic movement).
- Expansion of terminal building depending on air traffic, passenger numbers etc.
- New fire station equipped with personnel and necessary vehicles.
- Creation of a police/customs office.
- Creation of mini-shopping area (including a duty-free section).
- Airplane fuel depot.
- Creation of an emergency evacuation area.
- Construction of airplane hangar.
- Update of Airport website.
- Creation of airline offices and check-in desks.
- Creation of a garbage collection area.
- Securing a direct, year-round 24-7 bus route between KSO-Argos Orestiko-Kastoria.

-Securing funds for the Aristoteles Airport future

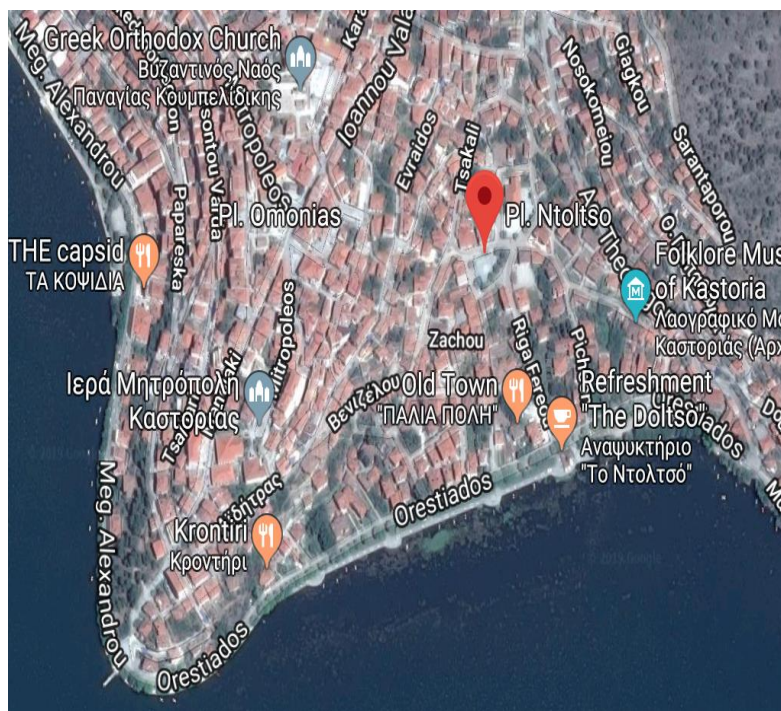
Funding for the modernization-development project of the Aristoteles Airport may be secured through national funds (at the municipal, prefectural or ministerial level), or through different programs directly connected to the European Union, specifically through the European Commission or through a National/EU funding partnership. (*Petkanas 2018*)

Another temporary solution for the initial stages of the project, would be to secure funds from different public/private donations. Although this method seems rather short-term and does not ensure success in the long run, it could prove to boost works in the beginning before a larger entity takes over the project for a greater period and for most of the modernization works in progress.

Another solution, as previously mentioned above, would be to assign the modernization of the airport to a third party by privatizing it, similarly to the fourteen regional Greek airports that were bought up by German conglomerate Fraport in recent years (through the FDI method). The third party, who would assume the airport's operations over a given period, would need to ensure for its development and growth.

VI) DOLTZO AND APOZARI - HISTORIC DISTRICTS

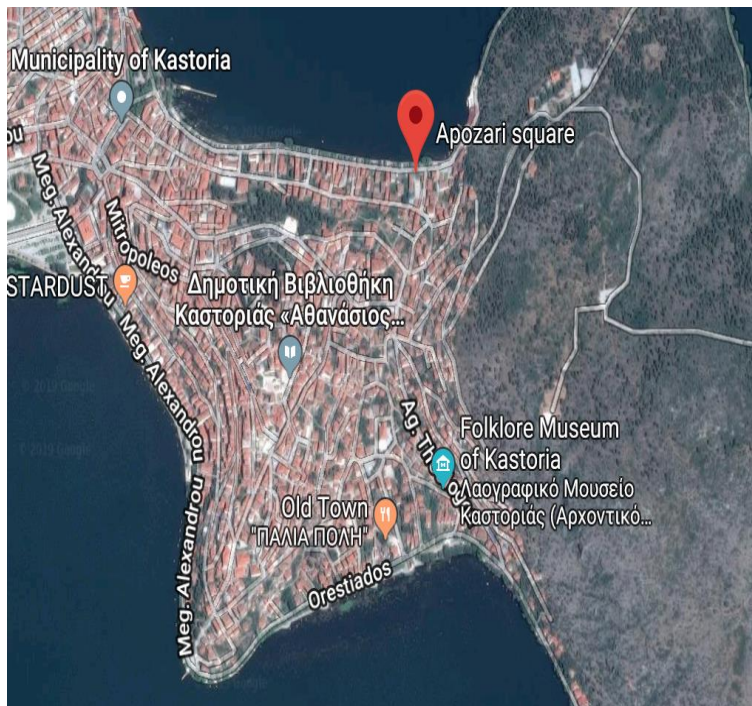
4.1



If Kastoria is globally known and recognized for something other than its illustrious past in fur production and commerce, that something else would be its exquisitely beautiful 18th and 19th century mansions perfectly tucked away in two small gorgeous districts along the northern and southern shores of lake Orestias. (*Drakopoulou 2013*)

Doltso (Ντολτσό, image 4.1) and Apozari (Απόζαρι, image 4.2) are hidden gems that portray and reveal Kastoria's past grandeur and significance as a Balkan center for commerce for more than three centuries. (*Tsolakis 2016*) Apart from the beautiful mansions, which are too

4.2



many to count, in the small stone alleys of these two districts, one can find exquisite examples of the city's Byzantine architecture (churches) as well as small notes that indicate that once upon a time, this city was a melting pot of three different civilizations (Greek, Ottoman and Jewish) that gave it a different aroma and feel that cannot be seen in many other places in Europe. (*Drakopoulou 2013*)

Today, Doltso (see image 4.1) as well as Apozari (see image 4.2), are residential neighborhoods for the most part that also feature beautiful hotels, cozy traditional restaurants and cafes as well as some of the city's most

important museums like the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle and the Folklore Museum, both located in the Doltso District. (*Tsolakis 2016*)

For the future tourist of Kastoria, Doltso and Apozari will become the high point of their visit to the city. An organized walking tour of Doltso, a visit to the museums, Byzantine churches and mansions will follow up with a traditional meal in one of the numerous restaurants located here, a glass of wine, a coffee and a stop to buy souvenirs. These two districts, had they been anywhere else in Europe, would literally be sinking with people overcrowding to simply get a glance at everything there is to witness. Everything that a foreign European tourist looks for in a visit to a small, cute, historic town is here undoubtably.

However, there is and has been a lack of promotion of these two extraordinarily beautiful historic parts of the city of Kastoria and what they have to offer. (*Samarini P. Samarini R. 2018*) These two locations, featuring traditional Macedonian architecture at its ultimate and greatest shapes and forms do have to show something that the tourist on the islands and in southern Greece cannot see. However, when one comes to Kastoria there is no or extremely limited road signage of where to go and what to see. As soon as someone enters Kastoria, he/she should be bombarded with information that can easily and successfully guide him/her to one of the many places that someone ought to visit when coming on a trip to this city.

Doltso and Apozari Districts-What needs to be improved

The analyses of these two districts was one of the hardest elements of this thesis paper as, apart from my own personal visits to the locations, and historic references that I found regarding these two districts of Kastoria in Mr. Panos Tsolakis' book '*Kastoria-Place and History*' (Tsolakis 2016) and Mr. Haris Makris' book '*Kastoria, short history of city*' (Makris 2008), I faced significant trouble locating any additional information on their modern day aspects.

Minimal, if no scholarly articles, regarding anything from tourism, economy, religion, culture gave me or provided me with a modern-day insight or data regarding Doltso and Apozari. Therefore, I took it upon myself to come up with a series of changes that I personally believe should and could be applied to Doltso and Apozari in the near future, not only to make them more tourist friendly but also a bit more accessible and convenient for the people living there. My recent trip to the Old Town of Como, Italy highly impacted the suggestions that I make for the improvements of Doltso and Apozari.

→All mansions that have not yet been restored or have been partially restored and not been used, need to be completely restored immediately either through Municipal funds, or from the families that own them (could be supported from the municipality). The mansions in dire need of maintenance and preservation are the following.

The list includes mansions that are not necessarily located in Doltso and Apozari. (<http://www.orologopoulos.gr/el/blog/item/332>)

- i) Basaras Mansion (built 1750, Doltso district), plans for the location of the new Kastoria Museum of Fur
- ii) Tzotzas Mansion (built 1860, Apozari district), plans for the use of the building to store the National Archives of the State.
- iii) Gakis Mansion (built 1863, Doltso district)
- iv) Christopoulos Mansion (built 1753, Doltso district), plans for complete preservation and renovation to commence in the summer of 2019 by the municipality
- v) Siomkos Mansion (built N/A, Apozari district)
- vi) Gimourtzina Mansion (built N/A, Apozari district)
- vii) Zachou Mansion (built 1860, Doltso district)
- viii) Mantzoura Mansion (built N/A, Apozari District)
- ix) Draska Mansion (built N/A, Doltso District)
- x) Chalatsis Mansion (built N/A, Doltso District)
- xi) Basakyrrou Mansion (built est. 1821, Old Hospital District)
- xii) Papamantzaris Mansion (built N/A, Stavros district)
- xiii) Papachristou Mansion (built N/A, Agios Georgios District). Was passed on to the AHEPA (ΑΧΕΠΑ) association from the municipality of Kastoria in 2010. Since then no major works have taken place to restore it.

- xiv) Mironis Mansion (N/A, Doltso district)
- xv) Pavlou Mansion (N/A, Doltso district)

No matter the cost, the bureaucracy behind the renovation of a historic building, the strict building laws etc. there cannot be a single mansion that remains in bad condition, on the verge of collapsing. In the case that local public funds cannot be secured for these projects, municipal authorities should look for economic aid in other global entities for the preservation of historic buildings like the E.U. or local public/private NGOs or other organizations. Municipal and Prefectural Authorities must be adamant and ensure that all remaining mansions, no matter the condition they are in today, be indefinitely restored.

→Doltso central square- Make it a central meeting-starting point for all tourists wishing to visit the mansions, churches and museums in the area. Offer a wide range of souvenir stores, restaurants and cafes to ensure that the tourist remains preoccupied for the duration of the visit and contributes as much as possible to the local economy.

→Apozari central square- Also make it a central meeting point for tourists. Increase number of tourist shops and locations.

→Maintain a constant police presence in the areas to ensure for public safety of locals and tourists.

→Repave the stone alleys in many areas of Doltso. Make it easily accessible for everyone including the elderly, young children and handicapped people.

→Prohibit the illegal parking of automobiles in alleys or roads that may interfere with tourist paths.

→Use better lighting to illuminate the districts roads and alleys better at night to make them attractive to tourists even after sunset and the closure of main attractions in the area. (use LED lighting for less costly consumption).

→Once tourism rises in numbers, the city should make sure that the access points to Doltso and Apozari are efficient for traffic and should also ensure that parking spaces are offered to make someone's approach and visit as easy and organized as possible.

→Furthermore, make museum, church and mansion visiting hours much more flexible than what they are today.

→Informative and direction boards in key-point locations (Greek and English).

VII) THE OTTOMAN PERIOD MONUMENTS

As is the case with most major cities and towns of the modern Hellenic Republic, Kastoria also, spent nearly five centuries under Ottoman occupation, which started in 1383 (*Tsolakis 2016*). The city was eventually liberated by the Hellenic Army in 1912 during operations of the First Balkan War. One can say, that Kastoria was a city (and greater region from that matter), that benefited economically to a great extent during the Ottoman

years (in comparison to many other Greek regions in the south). Its geographic position, its rich natural environment and its great heritage of fur trade (*Pouliopoulos, Ntanos & Pouliopoulos 2010*) forced the Ottoman rulers to provide the Kastorians with certain benefits that other Greeks did not have (*Makris 2008*). Kastorians relied on fur trade during the Ottoman years, trading as far as Austria, Hungary and Romania. Their wealth and influence in the greater Balkan region during the time of the Ottoman Empire is unquestionable. The vast majority of the Kastorian mansions were built during the latter Ottoman years, while also many Hellenic schools and other institutions (including the church of course), helped Kastorians remain educated on their religious faith and Greek heritage. (*Tsolakis 2016*)

Most traces of Ottoman architecture in the city have diminished in the years since the city's liberation from the Greek forces. Today, only three major sites remain to indicate what was once Kastoria's Ottoman past.

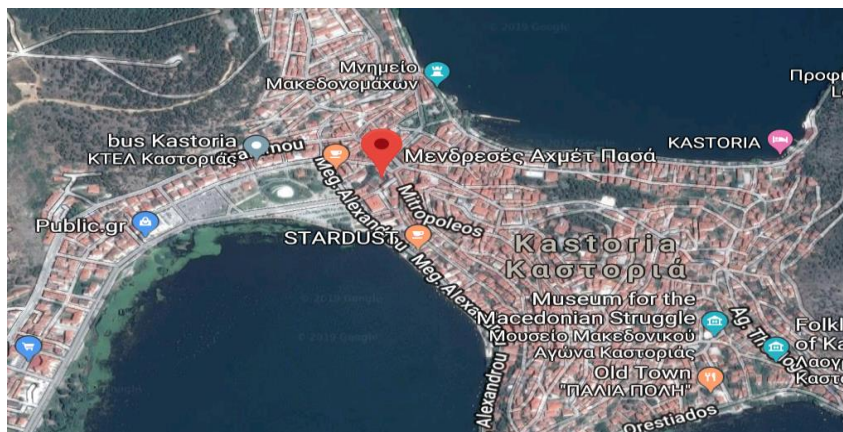
(<http://istorikakastorias.blogspot.com/2010/12/blog-post.html>) The three buildings, remain in terrible condition, on the verge of falling apart completely. Although there have been efforts over the years by certain members of the municipality as well as of the regional authorities in cooperation with educational and other institutions, no major decisions have been taken in order to completely reconstruct the three standing Ottoman period buildings. (*Petkanas 2018*)

Having placed a great deal of focus on the tourist aspect of Kastoria in this paper, I must admit, that it is mandatory that local authorities come together and find a means to salvage the three standing Ottoman era architectural sites. Ottoman monuments, apart from being historic evidence of the city's past, can also be utilized to generate more profits for the local economy in many ways that I will further analyze in this section.

The three main Ottoman- era buildings that still stand in Kastoria are:

→The Kastorian Madrasa/ Μενδρεσές (image 5.1)

5.1



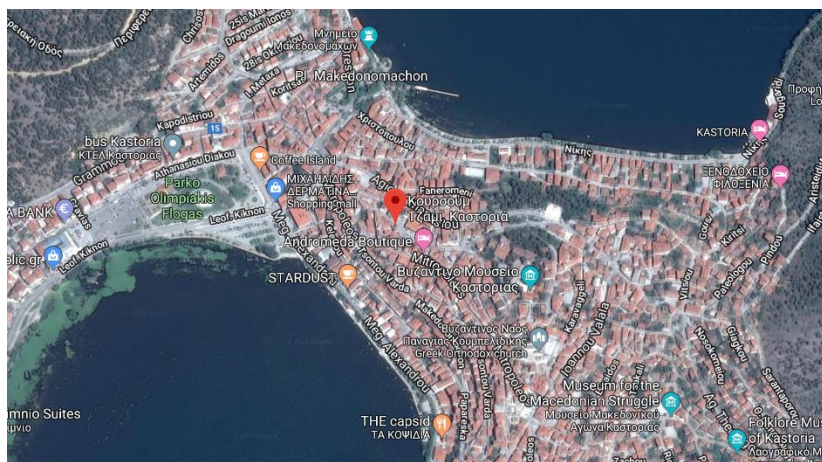
Located on Dikitiriou Street (Οδός Διοικητηρίου), right next to the main building of the regional offices (Αντιπεριφέρεια Καστοριάς), the Madrasa is probably the most important building of the Ottoman era that is still standing in Kastoria. The building is believed to have been constructed in the

beginning of the 18th century by Ahmet Pasha, the local ruler in the region. It was an important religious school, that trained members of the city's administration as well as of the religious clergy (also known as ulama/ουλεμάδες). The building is shaped in a “Π” form, it has fourteen separate dome-shaped rooms, which would have been used as classrooms and living quarters for the students. A brilliant courtyard is situated in the middle of the building.

<http://istorikakastorias.blogspot.com/2010/12/blog-post.html>

→The Kursum Mosque (also known as the Mehmet Mosque)/ Κουρσούμ Τζαμί (Μεγμέτ Τζαμί) (image 5.2)

5.2



Another brilliant example of the city's Ottoman architecture, it is the only and last standing Mosque of Kastoria (out of seven in total). It is believed to have been built sometime between the 16th and 17th century. Luckily, the Kursum Mosque was the main mosque of the City and main praying center for the Muslims, thus it was also the largest as well as the most highly and intricately decorated of all the mosques in Kastoria. Its dome was made of lead and right next to it one can see its half standing minaret. It is a truly remarkable building and its interior although in very bad condition, still shows traces of the intricate beauty that decorates the interior of many Ottoman monuments (including Arabic inscriptions alongside the interior walls).

<http://istorikakastorias.blogspot.com/2010/12/blog-post.html>

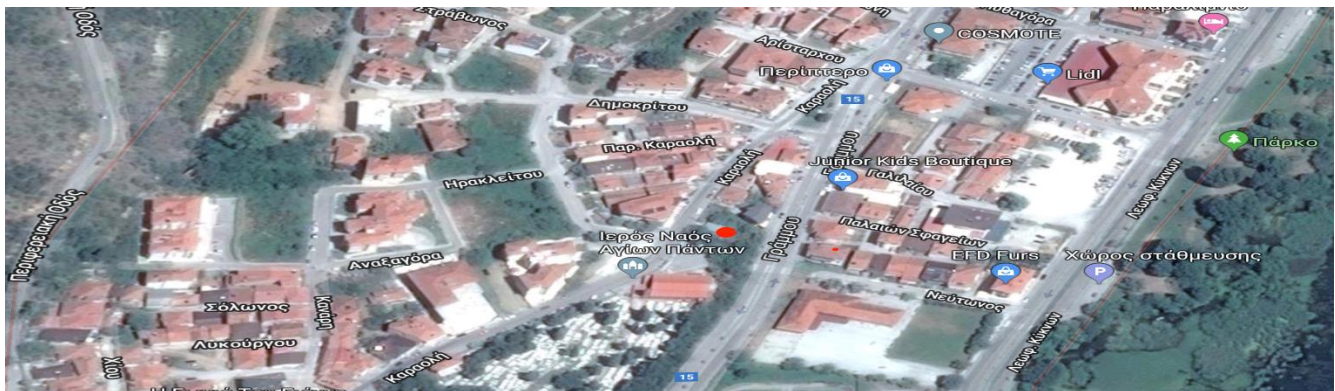
→The Ottoman Barracks (also known as the Ottoman kışla)/ Οθωμανικός Στρατώνας (image 5.3)

The third and final standing Ottoman building in the city of Kastoria is the building of the military barracks. It is believed to have been built by the French for the Ottoman

forces in the beginning of the 20th century, as a countermeasure to the Bulgarian Ilinden uprising in the area. The building was reconstructed in 1925 and was supposed to house the city's hospital or a religious school, something that never ended up happening. It is a large elongated rectangular building, that develops symmetrically on either side of a central three-story protrusion, a typical example of a simple military architecture. Its location in a natural outbreak of the land and next to a main thoroughfare of the city intensify this imposing and prominent position of the building. It is made of super structural masonry it has wooden windows with glass panels and is housed in a wooden tile roof. The original wooden floors were replaced post-war with reinforced concrete slabs and an axial row of wooden columns were added internally to the wings. The building has housed many different armies during many different wars that affected the region of Kastoria in the 20th century. Pictures of the building in its current condition can be seen below.

<https://www.greekarchitects.gr/gr/αρχιτεκτονικες-ματιες/ο-οθωμανικός-στρατώνας-στην-καστοριά>

5.3



-Future Aims and Goals

The benefits that maintenance projects of these three historic Ottoman buildings can bring for Kastoria are immense to say the least. In their most simplistic form, and as they are standing, these three buildings can become museums, and tourist attractions (especially for Turkish tourists who have recently started revisiting Greece in large numbers).

Many Greek cities have managed to cultivate their Ottoman heritage and gain benefits from it (like the city of Ioannina in the region of Epirus). Kastoria sadly has not. The buildings apart from actual museums, could also serve different purposes. They are all relatively large and situated in very busy parts of the city. Projects, as for example the establishment of the Kastoria Police Headquarters in the Ottoman Barracks building and its surrounding area, have been presented, but have not been successfully completed. (*Petkanas 2018*) The fact of the matter is, that Kastorians are very deeply split as to

whether the Ottoman buildings should be maintained or completely torn down. In the case of the Police Headquarters, the issue attracted government's attention as the two sides (one for the maintenance of the building one against) decided to take the issue to high court.

I personally and adamantly stand with those in support of reconstructing and maintaining the three last public buildings that remain in the city from its Ottoman era. The first reason is because the monuments can still be salvaged. The second because there are so many ways that the municipality can take advantage of them. It is ridiculous to say the least, that they have not done so, thus far.

However, in the case that the municipality, or any other members of local administration, see that they either, **a)** do not wish to spend local funds on the maintenance of these buildings or, **b)** do not wish to turn them into museums for any given reason, they could rent them out to private entrepreneurs who may turn them into high class cafes or restaurants (in the city of Thessaloniki for example the Bey Hamam, and Egli Hamam old Ottoman bath sites, have been turned into cafe-restaurants, where the customer can enjoy a little bit of the town's Ottoman history together with a drink or a meal). The private entity would oversee the reconstruction of the buildings, paying for its maintenance while also gathering the profits from its personal operations. Tourists and locals will visit any historic site that is opened to them, whether it's in the form of a museum or a cafe/restaurant.

In the case that within the next years (as time is taking its toll on the buildings), the municipal and regional authorities decide that they wish to use their own secure funds in order to personally maintain and introduce these buildings to the public, they could also find other means for their use. For example, Kastoria does not have a public library, something that is unheard of in most European cities or towns. Any one of the three buildings standing could be renovated and made into a public library with daily working hours and an online website. The library could function independently or could cooperate with the city's only Technical Institute (TEI Δυτικής Μακεδονίας) and provide a place for students to study, conduct research and/or simply visit. There is nothing better than a place where knowledge and history come together, and any one of these three buildings can provide that.

European Union funds can be secured for such projects and are easily attained, after of course something clear, organized and specific in purpose is presented to Europe by local authorities. Not to mention that any projects of the ones mentioned and analyzed above, are sure to open and secure new working positions for Kastorians, in a town where the weakening economy and few job opportunities have forced many young people to look for work elsewhere. (*Karafolas, Alexandrakis 2015*)

To those who question why something from the Ottoman occupation period should not be torn down (for sentimental purposes), I will simply remind them that the Turks could do the same to any Byzantine-Greek or Roman monuments remain in Turkey. Instead they have managed to turn them into large profit machines and some of the busiest tourist attraction sites in the whole world, that in turn contribute massive sums of revenue to their local economies. It is time we look ahead and use both positives and negatives of

the past for the rapid and solid rejuvenation of Kastoria's economy and economic stability in the years to come.

If in fact the project of reconstructing the three Ottoman buildings is taken, in any way, whether public or private, it will be the municipal council's job to make sure that the surrounding area is not solely clean (from garbage and graffiti), but also easily accessible to tourists and locals alike.

VIII) KASTORIA FUR- PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

If there is one thing Kastoria is famous for globally, even to this day, is its once thriving fur industry that the entire city was either part of or somehow connected to for hundreds of years. Kastorian fur traders, from as early as the 17th and 18th centuries were well-known throughout Europe for their exquisite craftsmanship and amazing work (*Tsolakis 2016*). Kastoria flourished during the middle and late Ottoman period, trading with central Europe and the Balkans, while Kastorians set up stores in multiple locations throughout Europe (*Mavridis, Pouliopoulos & Pouliopoulos, 2009*). Kastorian fur trade saw alternate periods of economic prosperity and growth during the 20th century, with Kastorians promoting their furs to every corner of the globe. The economic crisis that hit Greece in the early twenty-first century was the final blow to an already weakened and deteriorating industry. It decapitated the fur industry of Kastoria which was the breadwinner of the entire city for centuries. Once the fur industry collapsed, everything collapsed, and most people in the city who once worked with fur, now have only great stories to retell of its once glorious past. (*Mavridis, Pouliopoulos & Pouliopoulos, 2009*) In this section I will summarize the current condition of the fur industry and offer some advice as to what could help it re-emerge stronger and more prosperous than ever before.

-Need for a “Historic Fur” monument or museum within city limits

I decided to include this section of my paper under the **Kastoria- The Future Fur Capital of Europe** section, because of its importance as mentioned below not solely to tourism, but to the recognition of Kastoria as an epicenter for European fur trade for hundreds of years.

The city of Kastoria does not have a single monument or informational center for tourists (statue, commemoration plaque, square, museum etc.) to honor the men and women of the city who for centuries provided Europe and the world with the most exquisite and beautiful fur coats and accessories. (*Liana 2018*) It is shocking that Kastoria has not yet put a project like this forward, not solely for the ethical purpose of honoring those who gave everything they had (and still do, to a lesser extent today) to the fur industry, but for tourism purposes as well. A monument or museum in the city will not only have informative purposes to the public who visit but will also become a main and

key tourist attraction that will define Kastoria as the fur capital of Europe, contributing to its international image and brand name.

Kastorians are proud of their heritage, despite years of economic difficulties and would most definitely appreciate a beautiful monument honoring them and their ancestors for their contribution to the global fur industry. Locations for such a monument can be found in multiple locations throughout the city, whether in the old town of Doltso, the Apozari district or even the city's entrance as one is entering Kastoria from the Kastoria-Grevena National Road (Εθνική Οδός Καστοριάς-Γρεβενών). A good location for example that I have considered would or could be where the former “Kastor Hotel” was located. A building located in the main entrance of the city (as one is entering from Dispilio) that had been abandoned for years and is in horrible, deteriorating condition; the worst welcome that a tourist could get entering the city. that is abandoned.

Should Kastoria want to be globally recognized as a center for fur, it most certainly needs to create a “fur informational point of interest” somewhere within the city limits. It needs to be easily accessible and magnificent both in size and content and a primary tourist attraction to anyone who visits the city. It is inexcusable that nothing exists in the city today reminding visitors of its history of fur production.

- Mr. Marcos Varnis interview

On one of my multiple visits to Kastoria for the purpose of writing this paper, I had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Marcos Varnis, an entrepreneur, founder and president of the “*Marco Varni*” fur company since 1973. I decided to interview Mr. Marcos Varnis as I knew, through his experience in the area of fur production and trade, he had the ability to give me a solid understanding of the current “fur crisis”, how it became so serious, as well as how Kastorian fur is perceived today abroad by foreign buyers. Mr. Varnis participates in multiple fur exhibitions globally, on an almost monthly basis and maintains two fur factories and a total of four stores in Kastoria, Katerini, Rhodes and Dubai.

Mr. Varnis stated that Kastorian fur was once (especially during the 1970s and 1980s) the most sought out and elegant fur on the global market, while hundreds of millions of dollars of fur were being transported from Kastoria to every corner of the globe and simultaneously poured into the city of Kastoria, which sadly did not take advantage of it as it should have. Kastoria hit a peak and then the downfall came. (*Varnis 2019*)

Mr. Varnis mentioned three main issues which have led to the sporadic decrease; the involvement of the Chinese fur industries in the fur market followed by the Hellenic economic crisis that served as a second major blow to the fur industry in the city of Kastoria. As soon as Chinese fur was introduced to the market, it was impossible for multiple Kastorian companies to compete against them, their production levels and the prices they were able to sell their products and commodities at the global market for. There was a serious depreciation in the fur industry of Kastoria after Chinese players entered the market in the early 1990s, which caused many smaller family fur businesses to cease their

operations or merge with much larger companies. Following this, a significant amount of pressure had been placed on Kastorian fur companies by multiple NGOs (non-governmental organizations) such as Greenpeace, who questioned the methods through which Kastorians acquired their fur and the damage they were causing to the environment and the ecosystem. Finally, the Hellenic economic crisis of 2009, as mentioned above, dealt the fatal blow on some of the small, medium-sized fur companies in the area, that were simply not able to survive. Mr. Varnis stated that only very few of the original Kastorian fur companies of the 1970s and 1980s remain in Kastoria and can be seen as key players of the global fur trade today. All the rest have either been forced to shut down or are “barely making ends meet” as he mentioned in the interview. (Varnis 2019)

Another major issue, that comes in relation to the Hellenic Fiscal Crisis of 2009, is the fact that, as Mr. Varnas mentioned in the interview: “No one from the Greek government seems to care, and they have completely abandoned the Kastorian fur industry”. With Bulgaria taxing fur factories at under 10% and the Greek government taxing them at close to 30%, even during a period of crisis, it is not a question why: a) so many fur factories and smaller family-owned businesses in Kastoria have been forced to shut down, or b) why they have chosen to relocate to other countries in the Balkans. “*When production costs are so high*”, Mr. Varnis stated, “*and demand is not what it used to be, the government needs to provide the entrepreneurs with motives, however all it does is run them dry*”. (Varnis 2019) Mr. Varnis stated that the current Greek government in power now, has truly done the least possible for the Kastorian fur industry compared to any Greek governments in the past. “*All they care about is the public sector, while the private sector is trying to catch a breath*” Mr. Varnis stated. “*How can a country survive if incentives are only given to the public sector, and never to the private sector; to store owners, to business owners, to the middle-class working man?*”. (Varnis 2019)

Mr. Varnis does not believe that anything better can happen, nor any improvement can come while the current Greek government is in power. He also explained how Kastoria as a city, may have benefited from its flourishing and economically powerful and world-renown fur industry once upon a time, but it made a grave mistake in doing so. “*You cannot, as a city place all your bets solely on one industry*”, Mr. Varnis exclaimed, “*because should something happen to that industry, or should something go wrong, as it did in Greece and especially in Kastoria, that city will have nowhere else to turn to*”. (Varnis 2019)

When asked about the potential for Kastoria to reclaim its “global throne” and prior status as the “Mecca of European Fur”, Mr. Varnis said that it could happen most definitely, if certain things occur and certain mistakes of the past are not repeated. Mr. Varnis explained that when travelling to fur exhibitions in Milan, Dubai, Moscow and even in Hong Kong, Kastorian fur, even to this day is considered by buyers as premium quality fur. (Varnis 2019)

- Ms. Christine Liana Interview

Christine Liana was one of the first people I had the chance to interview upon one of my first arrivals to Kastoria when I started writing my paper. A native of Kastoria, born and raised in the city, Christine has worked in her family fur business located in Kastoria and has also worked abroad, promoting, manufacturing and selling Kastorian fur in Toronto, Canada. She is a young entrepreneur looking to expand her family business and market her fur globally using the internet and online retail as her prime source of international expansion and promotion. Christine mentioned that one of the issues that Kastorian fur companies face is the increased competition from Central Macedonia, where the bulk of the Balkan and Russian tourists decide to spend their holidays when they visit Greece. (Liana 2018)

I asked Ms. Liana, if she felt that Kastoria could ever recover from this “fur crisis” and her answer was a positive one. According to her, Kastorians need to get the word out and promote their fur better, in a modern way, using technology as an advantage and a highly effective promotional tool. As a solution to the problem, primarily she explained that she hopes that the two Fur Associations that operate in the city and to which the vast majority of the fur manufacturers and traders belong to, “The Prophet Elias” Fur Association (Σύνδεσμος Γουνοποιών Καστοριάς “Ο Προφήτης Ηλίας”) and can collaborate to a greater extent and provide even more guidance and incentives to the younger generation of people wanting to get involved in the fur trading business. (Liana 2018) She also explained, that the local authorities need to create something in the city (as I mentioned above in section one of this chapter) that gives the tourist a feel and understanding of the city's rich history in fur production and trade. “*There is nothing in the city to attract tourists when it comes to fur; no monument, no museum nothing that a tourist, Greek or foreign can visit to learn about the city's glorious past. This is terrible and something needs to happen immediately!*”, Ms. Liana explained. (Liana 2018)

Continuing our conversation, Ms. Liana told me that she is considering creating a new start-up fur business by selling her fur products via the internet. “*I am strongly considering starting up a new company, under a new brand name that will help me market myself and my products in a more effective way abroad and thus branch out in multiple directions*”, Ms. Liana said. “*My decision to eventually go forth with this project or not will depend on how much help and support I receive by the local officials. I would definitely need some help, guidance and some sort of 'safety' and support to go forth with this project*”. (Liana 2018)

Ms. Liana continued by saying that she would like to see local officials and the local government help new upcoming fur businesses market themselves internationally either by providing economic support in the initial process, or organizing a marketing project and inviting fur producers and traders in joining in. (Liana 2018)

Mr. Nikolaos Katsanos Interview

During my final visit to Kastoria from Sunday, I had the opportunity of meeting Mr. Nikolaos Katsanos owner of the “Fur Home” production and sales company and General Secretary of Kastorian Fur Association “The Prophet Elias” (Σύνδεσμος Γουνοποιών Καστοριάς “Ο Προφήτης Ηλίας), an association that was founded in 1915 and has since amassed global attention for its contribution to the promotion of Kastorian fur internationally. This year, the association organized the 44th International Fur Fair, which took place in the Kastoria exhibition center (near Argos Orestiko) from Thursday, May 2nd to Sunday, May 5th, 2019, and where more than 120 fur exhibitors from around Europe had the chance of introducing their items to the public. The former president of the association Mr. Ioannis Korentsidis, and head of the “Time for Work” (“Ωρα για Δουλειά”) electoral party, was elected mayor of Kastoria during the recent Municipal and Prefectural elections of 2019. He will assume office in September of 2019.

Mr. Katsanos and I had a very interesting conversation, where he expressed some of the ideas the association is considering implementing in order to further promote, not solely the fur of Kastoria, but the city as a whole. *“We are considering merging fur and history in Kastoria, by creating a new, official brand name that will elevate the status of the local fur industry internationally. The new brand name we have been considering is ‘The Kastoria Fur’.”* Mr. Katsanos exclaimed. (Katsanos 2019) *“Furthermore we have encounter multiple people locally and abroad that can help us penetrate different markets with this new brand name. Recently we were talking to the Greek ambassador in South Korea, since Asia is such a promising market for us”.* (Katsanos 2019)

Mr. Katsanos had a point and a very good one. Why should tourism and fur in Kastoria work independently? Why should they not be fused and thus both gain something positive in the process? By using the rich history of Kastoria one can promote fur in a more appealing and effective manner and through a modern marketing strategy. By using the fur of Kastoria, one can better promote its rich history and past and attract more and more tourists and clients to the city. It's basically a two-in-one process that can benefit both the fur industry as well as tourism.

Mr. Katsanos elaborated a little more on this project and we were also joined by Mr. Phedon Giatas, the Vice-President of the association, who also highly contributed to our conversation. He explained that apart from the new brand name given to Kastorian fur, marketing should occur with the “historic perspective” given above. *“Photoshoots can happen in the beautiful, grand mansions that we have in the Apozari and Doltso district, it will elevate the products, give them a more unique and noteworthy appearance, and also market the history that we process in this city”*, Mr. Katsanos explained. (Katsanos 2019) Mr. Katsanos continued by explaining how it is also important to promote EVERYTHING that is made from fur, not only the fur coats. *“We must let people know that not only coats are made from fur and that is not only what fur has to offer! Look, at my business, I sell excellent quality fur home objects for decorative purposes like*

excellent quality rugs, that many people don't know about. I have done my very best to market my products globally through electronic marketing, like via eBay". (Katsanos 2019)

Closing their remarks, both Mr. Katsanos and Mr. Giatas said how disappointed they were that Kastoria, as a city, is in the condition that it is. However they both not only expressed their belief that the whole situation in the city could have a 180 degree turn for the better, but that through their operations and their contributions via the Kastorian Association "The Prophet Elias" they are adamant to make it happen together with everyone else involved.

The Kastoria Fur Shopping Festival

Eager to find out more about Kastorian fur and its current image and marketing, I decided to attend the *Kastoria Fur Shopping Festival* where more than sixty different fur companies from Greece, Russia (primarily) but also from other nations in the Balkans and the Middle East were promoting their products and presenting their newest lines to the public. Fur companies at the Fur Shopping Festival included NAFA (The North American Fur Association), Tsoukas Bros Furs, Bourtsos Furs, Vitaniotis Bros Furs and multiple others as well. The venue was held at the Center for Fur of Western Macedonia (Κέντρο Γούνας Δυτικής Μακεδονίας) a large indoor exhibition center near the Kastoria Industrial Area (ΒΙ.ΠΕ. Καστοριάς). It was a three-day event, and to my surprise attracted multiple customers not solely from Western Macedonia or Greece for that matter, but from Europe as well. I would say, that most of the foreign visitors who attended the festival were either from Russia or from the Balkan countries.

In general, as a visitor I must admit that I was fascinated by the sheer size of the venue as well as the general organization that characterized everyone and everything partaking in the event. Multiple indoor shops were set up representing the different companies and their collections. Private security was always present at the venue, and a separate large area was offered for refreshments and snacks. Everyone working at the event was able to provide adequate instructions in English and maps were present in different locations within the indoor venue, indicating where every company was specifically located. Detailed flyers were also given out, with a map and the companies at the festival (in Greek and English) upon entrance of the exhibition center. During the days that I was able to attend, the presence of visitors (both Greek and foreigners) was high, and from the conversations I was able to have with multiple different representatives of the fur companies participating in the festival, they seemed pleased by the event and the overall turnout.

Despite the good organization, and the vast variety of furs and collections offered at the festival, there were two very negative factors that would deter me from ever visiting the venue again: 1) **getting to the location-arrival**, and 2) **smoking indoors**. It was very difficult getting to the fur festival from the Kastoria city center as it is located outside city

limits, approximately halfway between Kastoria and Argos Orestiko. Signage was not the least bit adequate or sufficient, and I had to stop on multiple occasions to ask locals directions on how to get there. The road is not in the best condition either and could be best described as an under average country road, that by no means contributes to the image that the Fur Association is trying to put forth in promoting its fur and image globally.

Another issue that I would describe as atrocious to say the least, is that smoking was allowed inside the exhibition center at all times. People were smoking in the hallways, the refreshments area, even in the stores themselves. Upon my departure from the exhibition center I asked to meet with the person in charge in order to file a complaint about this situation that only damages the entire image that the festival is trying to put forth. Unfortunately, I was not able to meet with the person in charge, so I filed a complaint to the people at the front desk. It is absurd that in the year 2018, at an exhibition center where some of the most elegant, stylish and expensive furs the Greek and global market have to offer, people are allowed to smoke inside. As far as I know, I was not the only person who complained about this negative aspect of the fur festival that day.

-Kastoria and its Global Marketing of Fur

The International Fur Fair of Kastoria (May 2nd- May 5th, 2019) and the Fur Shopping Festival (November 1st- November 3rd, 2018) are two events that most definitely give a “breath of fresh air” to the local economy of Kastoria, but most importantly to multiple fur production companies and businesses that are struggling at the moment. They do attract a significant number of tourists to the city most of whom purchase merchandise from local companies, but they also attract foreign fur producers that can exchange ideas with locals and even begin partnerships that can prove to be long lasting and extremely beneficial. (*Gillespie, Riddle 2015*) I do applaud these events and do believe that they are significant to the city and to the boosting of the local economy. However, that is not to say that they should limit themselves and what they can achieve. Kastoria needs to market these fairs and festivals through a highly intensive marketing campaign that will target specific areas in Europe and will attract an even greater number of people. (*Pouliopoulous, Pouliopoulos 2014*)

Having looked up both events, prior to their commencements I have concluded that their marketing (advertising campaigns) are relatively poor. By marketing campaigns, I specifically mean “*to form a communication by which a firm is able to inform customers of its products and services and create interest in its offering. Marketing is a multidimensional process made up of various strategies; however, a primary goal of any marketing strategy is to increase sales and profitability.*” (*Kim, Ko 2012*) They should use Facebook, twitter and any other means of social media to bombard the public at a constant rate internationally. Since the Fur Fair of Kastoria aims at not solely attracting fur companies, and visitors but promoting the luxury goods that will be on display, they

should primarily use technology development in order to allow customers and potential clients to interact with these premium goods prior to their arrival (*Kim, Ko 2012*).

The Fur Fair of Kastoria and the Fur Shopping Festival, should, at a first point become chief important events, for those specific dates, in Greece to say the least. In other words, they should completely captivate the Greek market for those dates through an intensive social media marketing campaign. They should invest all possible funds in an advertising campaign that will harness the interest of even the most non-interested person in the country. Sporadically, this campaign should strike the Balkan nations and Russia and finally the whole of Europe as it grows to an exponential rate internationally. According to authors Kim and Ko: “[...] *companies not engaging in social media as part of their online marketing strategy are missing an opportunity to reach consumers. With a significant percentage of people passing along information to others through social media, the value of one customer is worth far more than what he or she initially spends. Thus, firms and brands now need to factor in the value of customers and also the influence of social media on them.*” (*Kim, Ko 2012*)

As time progresses and as revenues increase, I would like to see these events being promoted on prime-time television and radio stations across Europe, why not even cultivating partnerships with some of the most popular clothing and style firms in the continent. Kastorians have the know-how, the experience, the expertise and a glorious history of fur trade making their merchandise delectable across the world. (*Mavridis, Pouliopoulos & Pouliopoulos (2009)*). Now, they simply must get together and come up with a game plan that will turn their operations and marketing techniques from “local” to “global”. (*Gillespie, Riddle 2015*) It is time for the fur industries to be reborn and to be internationally recognized for the exquisite and breathtaking quality of fur they have to offer. Competition is high and costly, so only through immediate cooperation, synergy and a shared marketing procedure can Kastorian fur companies combat the threat of Chinese fur within the global market and climb the “ladder of success and recognition”.

IX) KASTORIA-AGRITOURISM AND GASTRONOMY

Kastoria, apart from being a beautiful, scenic city, has also been blessed with a proper mild and cool climate, appropriate for the mass cultivation of certain fruits and vegetables. Popular across Greece for its legumes, beans and lentils for the most part, (*Doudoumi 2015*) as well as for its apples and its grape vines, Kastoria makes up for an ideal food-tasting/ wine-tasting destination for anyone interested in learning a little bit more about the rich gastronomy of the area and enjoying some of the delicious foods and spectacular wine this part of northwestern Greece has to offer. A center for “agritourism” that can highly contribute to any local economy, which is, according to author Diana Marin and her *Study on the Economic Impact of Tourism and of Agritourism on Local Communities*, something of vast importance to agricultural communities. (*Marin 2015*)

Kastoria is also famous for its cheese production as well as of its honey production with many processing and packaging plants spread out across the county distributing these products which are and have been in high demand. The rich, alpine forests of the county also provide Kastorians with mushrooms and chestnuts, which are commonly added to some of the local dishes. In Kastoria, high quality meets high demand, and the local products are well-known on a national level. It is time that the wonderful products of the region are promoted at an international level as well. (*Papantina 2019*)

I am, as I believe most people are (for the most part) a big fan of good, healthy and delectable foods for that matter. Greece is famous for its Mediterranean diet all over the world. There is not a single major city in world that does not have a Greek Souvlaki or Gyro store to be proud of! Tourists come to Greece to dry delicious fish dishes, salads and other delicacies that they have read of in books or have seen on cooking shows on television. Whereas this might be the case for the Greek south and the islands (where saltwater fish dishes, and Mediterranean meals are a commonality), I personally feel that the northern Greek cuisine, and with that the cuisine of Kastoria has been overshadowed. Kastoria and northern Greece (for the most part) stand out because their dishes are mostly hefty, derived from the cold, mountainous climate of the north. Incredible dishes with recipes that go back centuries synthesize, what is to me, the absolute best a Greek kitchen has to offer. Promoting the local products and local cuisine as something better than the “average” or rather “common” Greek food that people know about abroad is one step to begin.

However, it is not simply about mere “promotion” and marketing” when it comes to the food Kastoria has to offer. It is about tending to the customer’s/consumer’s needs by identifying them and finding ways to satisfy them. In other words, Kastorians need to first examine the potential and capacity to which visitors from Greece or abroad would decide to purchase the food, wine, agricultural products etc. that they have to offer. As authors Richard Mitchell and C. Michael Hall put it, “*By understanding how tourists make their decisions to purchase and/or consume food products we will be able to gain a better understanding of when we need to intervene in their decision-making process. Appropriate intervention can, in turn, be used to persuade them to purchase ‘our’ food products and services*”. (*Mitchell, Hall 2003*) Kastoria has the means and the goods to satisfy- it’s about knowing when and how to do so.

-Promoting Food Locally and Internationally

Kastoria, as a city, has multiple restaurants that serve exquisite local meals at reasonable prices. From a quick glance on TripAdvisor, one can see that almost every single one of the local restaurants has excellent ratings not only for the food they offer their customers, but for their cleanliness, their organization, the quality of their service etc. Kastoria, must use this as the ultimate weapon of getting its cuisine out to the world. One of the most important parts of a tourist's trip to a foreign city, is the food he/she

consumes. (*Mitchell, Hall 2003*) It is important that just as the city creates a brand-name for itself, the local cuisine (local restaurants) does also. Kastorians do not need to make their food unique and delicious-it already is. Kastorians need to make their food a global sensation that is admired world-wide for its excellence and can become the single reason for which a foreigner decides to visit the city. (*Mitchell, Hall 2003*) So, essentially by “promoting locally”, meaning, by using the local restaurants as the initial tool of Kastorian cuisine promotion, create a “shock and awe” experience for the tourist. In other words, let the local restaurants promote their food in a way that is captivating to their customers and makes them feel like there are always enjoying high quality dining. (*Du Rand, Heath 2006*)

A good step to begin promoting food locally, would be to host a “Kastorian food tasting event” every year. Every restaurant or business for that matter, could promote its best dishes and recipes to locals and foreigners alike. Events like these gather attention and give the tourist the opportunity to try different dishes from different places simultaneously. I place emphasis on food, because I truly anticipate that it will be a game changer and will boost the local economy. Greece is well-known for its Mediterranean diet worldwide. It's time that this changes. Kastorian cuisine may not offer the typical fish/Greek salad dishes that southern Greece and the islands have to offer. It offers more. Tastes that European would never expect to find in Greece, delicious dishes dating back hundreds of years bringing forth tastes and aromas of the European Balkans and the near East. The fact that Kastoria does not offer the typical Mediterranean diet to its tourists may be seen as a weakness to some. But to me, for all the reasons mentioned above it is a “game changer”. Promote the local food and dishes well locally and abroad in multiple food contests, seminars, cook-offs and Kastoria will be sure to become a gastronomy destination in the near future without a doubt.

- Interview with Mr. Damianos Levantis- “Kastor Melina”

I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Diamantis Levantis who owns a large apple plantation just outside Kastoria, in the village of Tichio (Τοιχιό). His company is called “*Kastor Melina*” and he exports apples to multiple locations abroad such as Jordan and Egypt. Mr. Levantis and I discussed the reasons for which the Kastorian apple industry has not flourished exponentially and has not been able to promote its products and of course expand on a European and even global level to the extent and proportion that it could. Mr. Levantis explained that even though the export potential for Kastorian apple farmers and producers is small, over the recent years many farmers have come together under GEOK (Γ.Ε.Ο.Κ.)- the Agricultural Company of Fruits and Vegetables in the region, and numbers exporting vegetables and fruits have in fact increased. (*Levantis 2019*) Mr. Levantis continued by saying that at a national level incentive (mostly in monetary form) are provided through agricultural programs by the Greek government to young farmers wishing to create some small start-up businesses. (*Levantis 2019*) However as Mr.

Levantis explained, *“The incentives given to us young farmers and producers over recent years are definitely helpful, but they are simply not enough. Also, in recent years they are very hard to acquire. Fifteen to twenty thousand euros provided to you by the government is barely enough to help support an agricultural company or business in its current operations. Should you want to start something entirely new, this money will not even be enough to purchase the basic machinery needed machinery. I have been a producer of apples for many years, and I can simply tell you that I could not survive or continue producing without some external economic support”*. (Levantis 2019) Mr. Levantis remarked that agriculture in Kastoria is probably one of the very few things that holds Kastoria and its dying economy together. He mentioned that the fur industry has been fading away, and the number of university students studying and soldiers serving in Kastoria has nearly diminished. As Mr. Levantis he said, *“More and more young people are turning to the agricultural sector; more people are coming to work on the farms and plantations or even in the production and packing installations throughout the prefecture. At a time when jobs in Kastoria are nowhere to be found, the agricultural sector is providing a 'breath of fresh air' for people looking to work.”* (Levantis 2019)

I asked Mr. Levantis how he was able to sustain and support his company in these difficult times. *“I like to plan ahead and create an annual expense plan that I will be able to support and maintain depending on how well the year evolves for me”*, Mr. Levantis told me. *“Depending on multiple factors that can have a negative impact on my annual production of apples (i.e. weather) and accordingly on my exports, I try to secure as many funds as I can either through my own personal profits or by receiving governmental funding. I do this for example, to purchase new necessary equipment and machinery that can be very expensive and that I could most definitely not have purchased had I not saved a good amount of money or been eligible by governmental funding”*. (Levantis 2019) Mr. Levas seemed optimistic about the years to come, even though recently the agricultural branch of Kastoria's economy has been facing many problems. *“We (farmers and producers) are more united than the people working within the fur industry”*, *We try to cooperate under GEOK (Γ.Ε.Ο.Κ.), share ideas, organize ourselves in ways that the modern era in agriculture demands and not simply salvage our businesses but modernize them and make them even better. Sure, some people from the agricultural industry in Kastoria do not wish to help us or meet us and prefer to work independently rather than cooperate, but they are very few to account for”*. (Levantis 2019)

In general, I would say that Mr. Levantis sounded more optimistic and pessimistic which was very positive to hear. Despite the multiple issues mentioned above, that make life and work that much more difficult for apple farmers and other producers in the region, it seems that unity and cooperation will eventually help to overcome them in the near future and that overall apple producers are heading towards the right direction to global recognition and success.

-Interview with Mr. Sotiris Graiskos- “Graiskos Beans of Korestia, Kastoria”

Mr. Sotiris Graiskos is an independent bean farmer who works off his land in the Korestia region (Κορέστεια) of Kastoria. Beans from his region of Kastoria are famous all-around Greece and are sold in the public markets and large supermarket chains of the country. I had the opportunity to speak with him and was highly intrigued by his opinions and the ideas he shared with me about his profession and the fact that, despite beans being known as a “food symbol” of Kastoria, there has not been any kind of successful promotion, so that large quantities of beans may be exported abroad (as is the case with the apples for example).

Mr. Graiskos explained that one of the main problems that the bean farmers face is that their beans or lentils for example are not standardized or officially recognized as “Kastorian beans” or “Kastorian lentils” for example. In Mr. Graiskos' words, *“It is our fault (Kastorians) who have not given an official name and standardization to our product in order for it to emerge and be exported in large quantities to Europe. We do not advertise our product because it is not packaged, and so dealers bring cheap goods from China and convert it to 'Kastorian' causing it to lose in value of price and quality. People think they are purchasing beans from Kastoria when they are actually not”*. (Graiskos 2019)

Mr. Graiskos seemed to be fed up with the situation, something that has personally pushed him to take the initiative of approaching people who work in markets and presenting them his own beans under the name “Graiskos Beans- Korestia Kastoria”. As Mr. Graiskos mentioned, *“I always sell my beans on my own; I have even travelled to the Peloponese to do so. I avoid mediators or retail because that will most definitely cause my product to lose its value and can have a very negative effect on me in the future. My beans are my beans, their quality is excellent, I cultivate them and sell them on my own, to ensure that the quality stays excellent and that customers are happy. I want them to know for a fact that the beans I sell are truly from Kastoria”*. (Graiskos 2019)

So basically what Mr. Graiskos explained in his interview with me was that the most important part of why the bean product of Kastoria is losing its value and is not able to be exported is because there is no standardization of the product as “Kastorian” with proper packing so as not need for a middleman to partake in the transaction and of course to immediately stop the foreign products coming in the country as a first step to success, before the Greek product is sold and can be exported in large quantities abroad.

Mr. Graiskos, as with some other entrepreneurs of the city and the region in general that I had the chance to talk to, explained to me that yet again, there is no cooperation and organization in the bean production and export industry. Everyone works independently, caring only about their own personal success, rather than the unified success that could ensure that Kastoria's beans become well known worldwide.

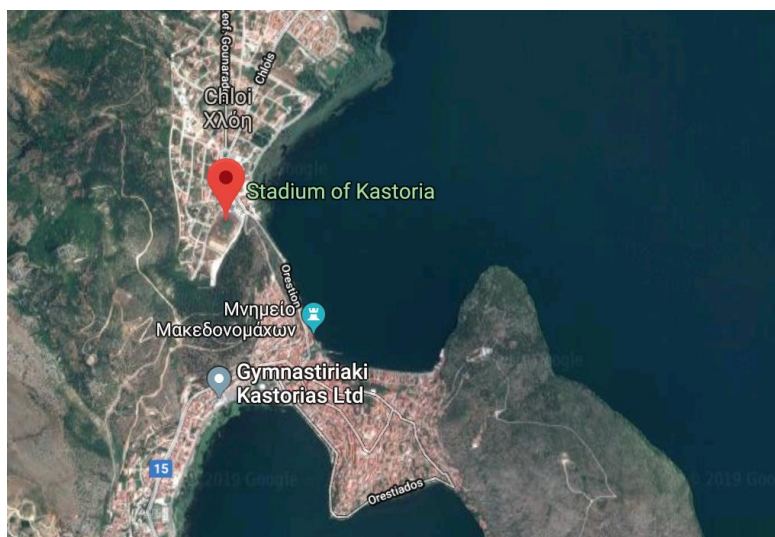
X) KASTORIA- ATHLETIC FACILITIES

In this section of my paper I will delve into the athletic facilities that the Municipality of Kastoria offers its citizens as well as its professional sports teams. Having visited both the municipal football stadium located in the suburb of Hloi, and the Indoor Basketball Arena, located right next to the football stadium, I will analyze their current condition and the necessary works that need to be done in order for them to reach the necessary standards of 21st century athleticism. In this section I will also add the need for Kastoria to create an indoor swimming pool, something that multiple other municipalities in Greece offer their citizens.

-Kastoria Football/ Track and Field Stadium (Δημοτικό Στάδιο Καστοριάς) (see image 6.1)

i) Location

6.1



The stadium itself is on the north-west side of Kastoria, just as one enters the suburb of Hloi, on the road leading to Florina. Entering the city from the south, you will go straight without to turn nowhere. You will reach a point where the road is divided into two. The signs point right to "Center" and left to "Florina, Stadium". Turn left and after 1 km with the lake on your right you will reach the stadium.

ii) General Information

Year of Construction: 1990

Capacity: 8.000 (approximately)

Stands: 1- in bad condition

Football pitches: 2 including practice pitch- in bad condition

Track and Field: Yes-in bad condition

Floodlights: Yes

Scoreboards: No
 Parking: Yes
 Asphalt Road Access: No
 Stadium Roof: No
 Plastic Seats: Partial
 Changing rooms: Yes
 Entrances: 5
 Last improvement: 2002
 (<http://stadia.gr/>)

iii) Current State/ Condition

I do not wish to create false impressions in my paper, and therefore I will speak nothing but the truth about anything I have decided to present and analyze. In the case therefore, of the Municipal Stadium of Kastoria, there is only one thing that comes to mind when I recall my latest visit to the facility- abandonment! The stadium is in horrible condition from any given perspective and from any standpoint that one looks at it.

It features one main large cement stand (with five entry points for spectators), the majority of which does not even have proper seating. The grass turf on the football pitch is full of weeds and patches of dried out grass, the track section of the stadium is also in horrible condition. There is no asphalt road leading to the stadium (the road is a hole-infested gravel road), no parking area for spectators, and of course no scoreboard, abandoned toilets, and graffiti-infested entrances. Not much has been done to the stadium since its construction in 1990, and together with the once famous and celebrated team of the city, Kastoria FC which won the Greek cup in 1980, falls deeper and deeper into decay.

The stadium calls for an immediate demolition and reconstruction from the start, a project that will take years, and lots of money in funding, but that is necessary. It is unbelievable that a horrific structure like this is still standing today and qualifies for health and safety regulations. In the improvements section I will mention one thing and one thing only, the demolition of the stadium and the establishment of a new one in its place as soon as possible. It may sound radical and extreme, but it should happen no matter the cost and no matter the time it will take to be constructed.

iv) Improvements

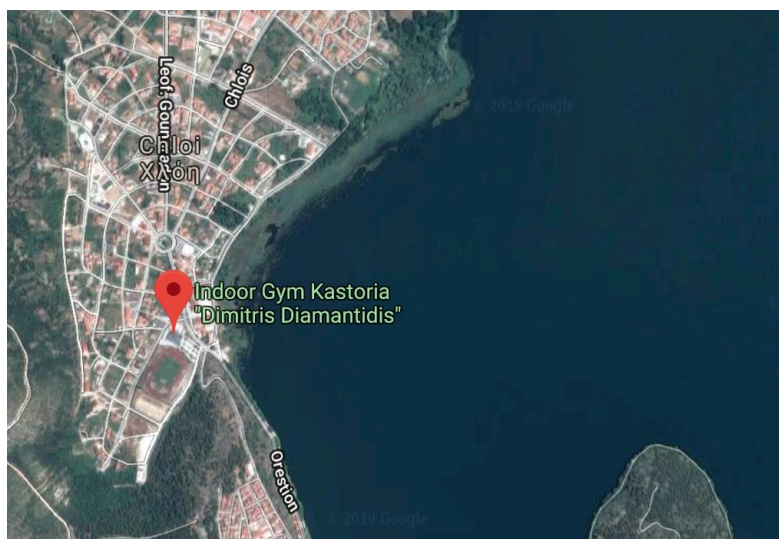
1. Demolition of existing cement stand, excavation and complete reconstruction of football turf and track.
2. Creation of a new, modern stadium at the exact same site of the existing one, with a minimum capacity of 4,000 spectators, all-seated and all-covered (with capability to increase spectator capacity in the future).

3. Ensure easy road access to new stadium and appropriate parking lot, with proper lighting system.
4. The new stadium should meet all UEFA-FIFA standards, and should either be funded through the support of the Prefecture of Western Macedonia and the National Ministry of Athletics (using EU funds) publicly, or by private donations/private entities to whom the stadium and its operations will belong over a given period of time in exchange for its construction and maintenance.

-Kastoria Indoor Basketball Hall “Dimitris Diamantides” (Κλειστό Γυμναστήριο Καστοριάς “Δημήτρης Διαμαντίδης”) (see image 6.2)

i) Location

6.2



The indoor basketball hall itself is on the north-west side of Kastoria, just as one enters the suburb of Hloi, on the road leading to Florina. Entering the city from the south, you will go straight without turning anywhere. You will reach a point where the road is divided into two. The signs point right to "Center" and left to "Florina, Stadium". Turn left and after 1 km with the lake on your right you will reach the indoor basketball hall, which is located directly next to the

municipal football stadium.

ii) General Information

Year of Construction: N/A

Capacity: Approximately 300

Stands: 1

Scoreboards: N/A

Parking: Yes

Asphalt Road Access: Yes

Stadium Roof: Yes (indoor)

Plastic Seats: Approximately 300

Changing rooms: 4
Entrances: 1 (main)
Last improvement: 2018
Canteen: Yes

ii) Current State/ Condition

I had the opportunity to observe both the exterior of the indoor basketball arena of Kastoria during my latest visit to the city (May 2019). Due to the promotion to the A2 Hellenic Basketball League (second tier of Greek basketball) of the Kastoria Basketball Team (Kastoria B.C.), some minor changes occurred in the arena including the modernization of some of the dressing rooms, the creation of a medical room, the adding of a new basketball hoops and the installment of plastic seats in the sole stand of the arena and the formation of a wooden parquet. In general, the interior of the arena is not in all that terrible of a condition, although a scoreboard would eventually be necessary as well as a possible expansion of the seating capacity (if the team is eventually promoted to the top tier of Greek basketball). The newly formed dressing rooms for male and female athletes alike are in good condition, and the canteen is also relatively tidy, organized and clean. Lighting seems adequate, although I have heard complaints of the roof being in poor condition causing water to sometimes seep into the arena on a rainy day.

The exterior of the arena is a whole different story and is in terrible condition. A good portion of the cement walls are crumbling, while they have not been painted in a very long time showing clear signs of decay and are littered with graffiti vandalism on all four sides. Also, the arena does not feature any handicapped access points, and the parking lot although large and spacious is not in the best condition either. There are no parking lines to distinguish the number of possible parking spots available, thus cars park in a disorderly manner sometimes even blocking the main entrance of the arena. The asphalt in the parking lot is completely worn out and needs to desperately be resurfaced. Finally, the surrounding area is littered with garbage and trash and shows signs of ultimate neglect.

iv) Improvements

1. Cement replacement of exterior walls and repainting of entire arena.
2. Reconstruction of arena roof.
3. Access point created at: a) the main entrance of the arena, and b) the canteen.
4. Parking lot, and road leading up to parking lot need to be repaved as soon as possible. Parking lanes must be clearly marked, including parking for the handicapped so people don't park randomly.

5. Instalment of outdoor lights in parking lot (LED lights would be a good solution)
6. Instalment of a scoreboard within the arena.
7. Surrounding area must be cleaned regularly, greenery must always be maintained.
8. Establishment of a video monitoring system to ensure for the safety of the premises and the facility always.
9. Reconstruction of entrances (offices, canteen, arena) and adjacent sidewalks.

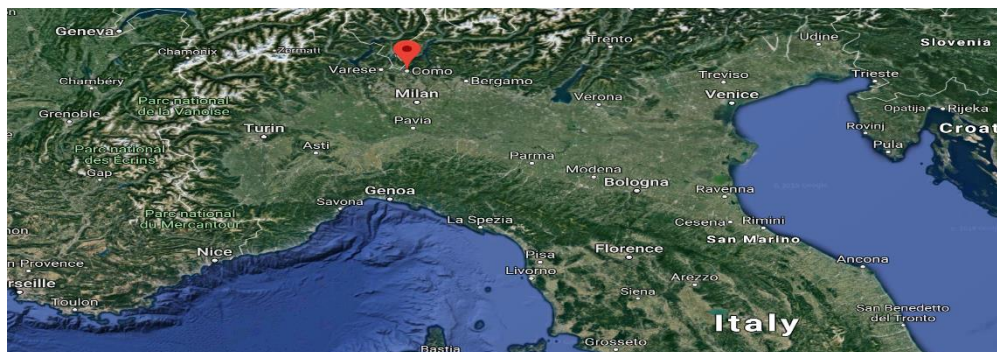
iii) **Turning Kastoria into a European state of the arts, football training ground**

Kastoria's climate is perfect for summer season training of football clubs in Greece. It offers a mildly cool climate without intense fluctuations of the temperature, like that of Northern Italy. The creation of a state of the arts football training center, complete with all necessary infrastructure (football pitches, indoor gym, medical center, to accommodate players and staff will flourish and provide the area with multiple benefits. Luckily the surrounding area of Kastoria offers large areas of land where football training facilities could be created soon. The facilities could be used as football training grounds for professional football teams during the summer training season, and then be turned over to the public for the rest of the year.

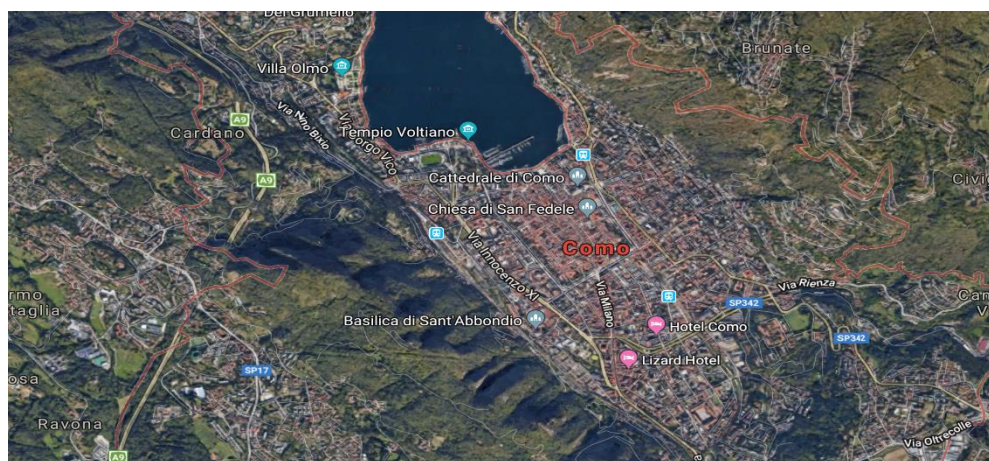
The idea of an indoor swimming pool mentioned in my introductory paragraph of this section, could be added on to this project and could have therefore multiple uses. Funding of such a project could be both public and private. Public funding could be ensured through the Prefecture of Western Macedonia (and through them the European Union), and private funding could be ensured by approaching professional football teams, situated in northern Greece or even the Balkans for that matter that would be interested in investing in the area. A public-private partnership could even occur with the Prefecture of Western Macedonia/Municipality of Kastoria encountering private entities (not necessarily football teams) that would be interested in investing in such a project in the area. This “joint venture” would ensure a state of the arts facility created near the city of Kastoria that would benefit the local populace, open job opportunities and give a boost to the Kastoria “international brand name” that the city is trying to bring forth. The facility would also ensure a high hotel booking rate during the summer season for the hotels located in and around Kastoria.

XI) THE COMO COMPARISON

7.1



7.2



Wanting to further examine and explore Kastoria's potential in eventually turning into a center of trade, production and especially tourism in southeastern Europe, I decided to take a trip to another European city, that I personally believe, has already achieved all that Kastoria wishes to achieve in the near future. My trip to Como (see images 7.1, 7.2) lasted for three days.

The reasons for which I decided to take a short three-day trip to the northern Italian city of Como in the region of Lombardy at this time of year specifically, are many. Primarily, Como geographically and climatically resembles Kastoria in many ways. Como, although a bit larger than Kastoria when including its metropolitan population (of approximately fifty thousand people), is built on a lake, lake Como, is surrounded by mountains (near Alpine climate), and is for the most part a popular winter destination in Italy. It therefore offers an alternative type of tourism for mountain, and nature lovers that most destinations of central and southern Italy do not offer. (*Martire 2015*) Similar to Kastoria and the northern regions in Greece in general.

Greeks and Italians historically and culturally have much in common as they share

a common heritage of thousands of years. Therefore, I felt that it would be more appropriate to visit a location in Italy than in any other European country for that matter, and to use the local population of Como when comparing to the local population in Kastoria.

Finally, aesthetically (even though I must admit that I did not expect it) Como reminded me a lot of Kastoria. With the lakefront at its center, and everything developed around it, Como's old, traditional houses in the historic district fuse with the newer part of the city and, for the most part, the high-rise buildings, making it nearly identical to the modern-day city layout of Kastoria.

In this chapter of my paper, I will pinpoint certain positive aspects and elements of Como's bustling city life that I felt, could be applied to the city life of Kastoria for it to develop economically in the near future.

-Tourism in Como

As mentioned in my introduction above, Como is not a large city for Italian standards. In fact, it is a rather small city that numbers approximately eighty thousand inhabitants in an area of approximately 37 km² (metropolitan area). (*Martire 2015*) However, during certain months of the year this population quadruples daily, as Como is a commonly visited all-year-round resort for the people who live in nearby Milan (50 km directly south). In fact, since Como is no more than an hour's drive north from Lombardy's metropolitan hub, many people even drive up to Como and its surrounding towns and villages for day trips. Judging by the fact that Milan, as a city with its suburbs counts nearly three million inhabitants, one can begin to see how Como strongly benefits from being located so close to a main city. However, local Italians are not the only tourists that visit Como all-year round. While visiting the city I noticed that at least one in every five people was a foreigner, specifically European and Asian. Como and its surrounding area basically border the southern part of Switzerland and therefore is a popular destination for many Swiss tourists, especially from the cantons of Uri, Glarus and Schwyz. One can see many cars in Como's street bearing Swiss license plate numbers for example.

Below I will briefly analyze some of Como's main tourist attractions, that I had the pleasure of visiting and getting ideas from to incorporate in my paper.

-Como tourist attractions/ Points of interest

i)Lake Ferries

Como, just like Kastoria is a perfect three-day getaway for anyone wishing to enjoy a nice, short, relaxing visit amidst a beautiful lake and spectacular mountains hovering over it. The lake, as previously mentioned, is the heart and soul of Como. Everything is built around it, and the main tourist attractions are also laid out on its shores. Lake Como is much larger and narrower than that of lake Orestias in Kastoria. In fact, Como is located on the southernmost tip of the lake which extends all the way up north to Switzerland. Beautiful scenic villages, with exquisitely maintained 17th, 18th and 19th century villas can be seen via the one hour (or three hour-depends on which one you decide to take) boat tour that is offered from Como lake harbor throughout most of the day, from numerous ferry companies.

I counted approximately fifteen to twenty ferries (not large, approximately carrying thirty-forty people each) lined up along the lake's harbor front carrying tourists back and forth to the numerous other small towns and villages lined up along lake Como. What made an impact on me when I personally took the boat tour to the village of Nesso (not the famous tourist destination of Bellagio as it was further north and I was pressured for time), was that every one of the villages, no matter how large or small in size and population had a very organized small port, so that the boats could stop, dock for a moment and drop off or pick up tourists.

Basically, the lake ferries serve as lake “buses” with each village and town being a separate stop for those who wish to get down and visit. With the same ticket, the tourist can re-take the ferry back to Como once his/her visit at a town or village along the lake is complete, or buy a new ticket if he/she wishes to continue the boat ride north or visit yet another town or village on the lake. The ferry rides were very organized, very safe, and the tour guide that was on the boat with us and explained what each village and town was famous for, was trilingual speaking Italian, English and French.

I took the ferry ride of Como lake in the morning at approximately 10 am, and the lines were packed with tourists from many places in Europe as well as many tourists from China. The short boat ride (up until the village of Nesso) was reasonably priced at 10 euros per adult and 5 euros for children under the age of 12.

ii) The Winter Games Festival

One of Como's main attractions during the winter season is the so-called “Citta dei Balocchi”, also known as the Winter Games Festival or the Winter Lights Festival (that lasts for over a month from late November to the beginning of January each year) and gathers an incredible number of people. The entire city center is basically transformed into a massive outdoor market, where people sell their different holiday goods. Cheese and meat products, local dishes and pastries, wines from northern Italy, toys, clothes, trinkets, everything someone would like to purchase for the holidays can be found at this festival.

Streets are not closed, as the old town of Como (where the festival takes place) prohibits vehicles from entering the narrow stone streets, except those that belong to store

owners and those that resupply the huge outdoor market with different kinds of goods. Como, more than any other season of the year, is known to be a famous Christmas and New Year's destination around Europe. Therefore, the local municipal officials, spend a great deal of time thinking of ways that they can improve the quality of services that Winter Games Festival offers locals and visitors alike.

In the middle of Piazza Cavour, the main square of Como that overlooks the lake, and the "heart" of the festival, the municipal authorities this year added a very large skating rink for children and adults. People visiting the festival, apart from enjoying shopping, a glass of wine, and a platter of cheese, meats and later pastries, can rent skates as well and give ice skating a try. For the visitor's safety at this massive, overcrowded outdoor market, a police patrol is present for the whole day making sure that everything is going well.

iii) The Duomo

The Duomo, also referred to as the "Como Cathedral" is Como's main church and seat of the Bishop of Como. It is in the heart of the old town (a five-minute walk from the Piazza Cavour) and is a magnificent example of early Italian Renaissance architecture, built over a period of approximately four hundred years. Visiting hours are between 7:30 am and 7:30 pm, and there is no entrance fee while the interior is absolutely striking and captivating with intricately painted murals and beautifully carved statues of religious importance, the sheer size of the Duomo is what shocks visitors the most. Hundreds upon hundreds of visitors both Italian as well as local (no matter their religious beliefs) enter the Duomo simply to admire this architectural gem and pay homage to its magnificence.

iv) The Old Town (Como city center)

Como old town, rather large in size and making up the entire city center, features small shops, boutiques and two-story residential buildings (many of which were built during the Renaissance), in an intricate network of narrow, stone-layered streets that eventually lead you to certain main squares like the **Piazza Cavour** or the **Piazza Alessandro Volta**. The old town features many old churches like the **Duomo**, the **Chiesa del Gesu**, and the **Chiesa di San Fedele** that are open to tourists during the whole year from morning to evening.

The **Pinacoteca**, the **Art Gallery of San Pietro** as well as the Conservatory of Music, the **MuRAC** (Museo Rifusi Antiaerei Como), the **Museo Giovio** and the **Museo Garibaldi** are located within the old city center which is enclosed by the city's two main avenues, the Via Innocenzo XI running west of the center and Via Dante Alighieri (which

later turns into Via Briantea), running east of the city center. The city has a **three-day museum pass** which costs 10 euros and gives the visitor the opportunity of visiting all of Como's museums as many times as he/she wishes for three days in total.

v)The Villa Olmo and Public Gardens

Villa Olmo, is a spectacular villa built during the early 19th century, by architect Simone Cantoni for Marquis Innocenzo Odescalchi). The Villa and its surrounding gardens are located along Via Bergovico, a five-minute drive (20-25-minute walk) along the western shore of the lake. It features a beautiful villa surrounded by lush, green gardens, once the home of the wealthy marquis and his summer visitors. The villa and the surrounding gardens open for visitors at 10 am and close at 6 pm. On Monday Villa Olmo is permanently closed to all. Admission to the Villa Olmo is free.

vi) The Tempio Voltiano and Public Gardens

A neo-classical monument-museum erected in honor of Alessandro Volta, a profound scientist and the inventor of the battery, who was born in Como during the 18th century. The Tempio Voltiano is located along the lake pedestrian walkway heading directly west from the central Piazza Cavour and is very near the municipal football stadium. The museum and its surrounding gardens, just like the Villa Olmo is open doing all days of the week, except on Mondays, from 10 am to 6 pm. Admission cost is 4 euros for adults, while children can visit the museum-monument for free.

vi) Como Piazzas

Como's "piazze" (or public squares) are meeting points for tourists as well as locals alike. Each one different in size, they all feature central monuments or point of interest, so they are easily noticed by the foreign eye. Each piazza has a central monument or statue erected in the middle of it honoring either a significant Italian persona from the past or an important event in Italy's history. Therefore, each piazza has a central point of interest that the tourist can easily identify to. Numerous, hotels, cafes, shops and restaurants encircle the piazzas offering the visitor a chance to relax or purchase something. Piazza Cavour, the central square of Como is the largest square and the main local bus system pick-up and drop-off point for locals and tourists alike.

-Como- Creating a Global Image

Como is a city that is well-known around the world for the high-quality services that it offers its visitors as well for its scenic beauty. A destination where many famous

personas have come either for their holidays or to buy real estate properties. Famous Hollywood actor George Clooney, for example purchased the “Villa Oleandra” (a beautiful 18th century mansion) in the small village of Laglio on Como lake for approximately ten million dollars in 2001 and has since been seen on multiple occasions walking down the streets of Como with his wife Amal Alamudin.

Many movies have been filmed in Como as well. Some of them include the 2006 James Bond movie Casino Royale starring Daniel Craig and Eva Green, Ocean's Twelve (2004) starring Brad Pitt, Catherine Zeta Jones, Julia Roberts and Bruce Willis as well as Star Wars Episode II- Attack of the Clones (2002) which used Como as a filming location representing the luscious planet of Naboo.

Como has done very well for itself in creating an attractive brand name. People are inclined to visit a destination because a movie was filmed there or because their favorite actor has once walked down its streets. Como, unlike Kastoria has managed to sell its global image on social media and via word of mouth. Create a brand name that intrigues people to want to visit it again and again, while simultaneously urge them to return. I have thought about everything described above, many times. Why should Como be the site of Hollywood movies? Why should Como receive such media attention from Hollywood stars and picture films and not Kastoria? Kastoria is equally as beautiful and, to my opinion has a much richer and complex history, making it an even more attractive destination than Como itself.

-Como- Urban planning and development

Prior to creating a strong and cohesive brand name for once's city, it is important to first be able to provide its citizens with a high quality of life and second be able to provide tourists with the services they need to not simply have an enjoyable stay, but to come back again and again and convince others to do so as well. Como can be separated into two distinct parts: **a)** the new part of town (the surrounding suburbs of Como) and **b)** the city center which incorporates the old town as well, which is where most of the main sightseeing attractions of the city are located in. In general Como was what I like to refer to as **C.O.S.**

It was a very **Clean** city*, everywhere I had the chance to visit. From main historic monuments, to museums, to public parks, to main piazzas and even the busy train station. Everything was maintained very well. Extremely rarely would I spot graffiti traces here and there (never on monuments or statues). Despite the large number of people that were visiting the city while I was there, by nightfall, when the shops and main public winter market would close, the streets and sidewalks were immaculate. Local municipal crews swept the streets and sidewalks in their entirety, so by the next morning Como city center was as good as new.

Como was also very **Organized**. There were no traces of illegal parking anywhere within the old town or outside in the city's suburbs. There were many parking options

throughout the city where locals and visitors could park their car before entering the old town at reasonable prices. Roads were all neatly and freshly paved and always had their appropriate road markings and signage. Sidewalks were large and roomy allowing for multiple people to walk on them simultaneously, crosswalks were clearly marked for pedestrians, and drivers obeyed the traffic laws at any and every given time.

All places of interest within the old city center or anywhere else in Como for that matter, were clearly visible on signs laid out throughout the city. Como was easily walked as it is small, so it was not necessary for me at any point in time to use the local bus to get to any given location. I never got lost in Como, and always found my destination quite easily. The city's official website for visitors (www.visitcomo.eu) provides the tourist with all of the necessary information he/she needs in order to get to the city easily and safely (i.e. timetables of train rides from Milan, local bus routes and important contact numbers in case of an emergency), visit all places of interest, select the best lodgings and wine and dine options that are available, and finally depart Como. I used the Como City website quite often during my trip and found it to be very helpful.

Finally, when it came to **Safety**, I was once again very pleased. At every main location or area of interest where large groups of people gathered (i.e. the winter market, the Villa Olmo, the Duomo, the Como-Brunate cable car entrance point etc.) officers of the local police as well as the Carabinieri were patrolling the areas to ensure that everything was safe and secure. Street patrols were out and about making sure that the traffic was always being monitored and regulated as well. I did not feel threatened or the least bit uncomfortable at any given time while in Como. Police presence, at these times of fear and uncertainty is very pleasant for the foreign tourist to see.

-Using Como to Kastoria's advantage

For me personally, Como is exactly where Kastoria should be within the near future. Providing its citizens with all services and modern facilities that the modern European citizen requires, while also giving the tourist an excuse to return and convince others to visit.

My trip to Como, although short, was mind opening to say the least. I witnessed with my own eyes what Kastoria can easily become within the next few years with dedication, organization, cooperation and perseverance. I think that it would be wise for members of the municipal authority of Kastoria to take trips like mine, visiting European towns and cities that resemble Kastoria in many ways to get new, fresh ideas to implement.

Furthermore, they should encounter many different people in many different areas of a foreign city's everyday life to be able to use examples in the betterment of the city for each person individually. I always thought that it would be a great idea for Kastoria and Como to create a bilateral partnership, sharing ideas, cooperating on multiple levels of the everyday city life, promoting one another simultaneously etc. All it takes is an email, a telephone call, a plane ticket and the willingness to undertake the task!

XII) CONCLUSION

This is not the end of this paper. I would like to clarify this. As Kastoria grows in the future, this paper will accordingly grow and many more elements can be added to it, developed and further analyzed in detail. The ultimate purpose of this paper was to show Kastorians that things in their city can change for the better and it doesn't take much to do so. It does however take time and effort not just simple words and promises. I have never been a mayor, a head of a prefecture or even a public sector employee for that matter. However, this past year I was able to step in multiple people's shoes, people who raise their own families in Kastoria, work and live there, look at their issues and problems, talk with them and hear what it is like to live in a small to medium-sized Greek city, at a time of economic struggle and hardship. I travelled to Kastoria on multiple occasions (ten in total to be exact) and once to the northern Italian city of Como to get new, fresh ideas that could be applied to Kastoria in the future. I conducted multiple interviews of people with different ideologies, mentalities and of different social, economic and political backgrounds. I got mixed ideas about certain things, saw and heard things that I personally didn't like, but I included them all in this thesis paper, worked around them and looked at them through a positive perspective, trying to get the best out of each and every person I met in Kastoria and each and every little detail they had to share with me.

The Cons

This thesis paper is far from perfect, and there are probably one hundred and one more thing that I could have mentioned regarding every section of my paper focusing on a different element of Kastoria's past, present and future. It would however have been impossible for me to pinpoint every single detail of a city of thousands of people in one thesis paper and then must analyze it as well. I would say that this was one of the “cons” of my paper, and a risk that I was aware of at the beginning of my writing, but one that I was willing to take.

Another “con” or negative factor in writing this thesis paper, was that in order for me to travel to another city ten different times over the past year (I live in Thessaloniki, Greece), and once abroad (Como, Italy), that required money, that I truly had to budget for in advance in order for this whole project to be possible. In some cases, when I had arranged meetings with certain individuals in Kastoria, or planned to visit a specific location in and around the city for the purpose of my analysis and presentation, they fell through, so not every trip was a successful one, or worth the money spent on gas, dining and accommodation.

I made the mistake of not mentioning the importance of natural gas to the city of Kastoria and how a full-out network throughout the city will be beneficial to the people (the current network and pipeline under construction will supposedly be completed by 2023). However, I did not wish to delve into yet another area of future development in my

paper that would require extensive analysis that could go on and on and that honestly, I had extremely little knowledge and understanding about. I decided not to include anything about renewable resources and their economic importance to the city of Kastoria. However, it could be a promising project for me to deal with in the future, once I get a little more educated on it.

Finally, because no one in Kastoria had ever dealt with the city's issues to this extent, there were times when I gathered a lot of negative attention. My family does in fact hail from the region of Kastoria, however I am still a somewhat “foreigner” to the city as I was not born or raised there. It was therefore very difficult for me in certain situations to certify that I had absolutely no personal, economic or political ambitions for this thesis paper, nor did I in any way wish to “intrude” and cause any suspicions or negative curiosity within the community. This was especially difficult this year in specific, a time when municipal and prefectural elections are taking place all over Greece. Even though I was in fact approached and aided on multiple occasions by an individual from Kastoria running for mayor, who I thank kindly for the interest he showed in the completion of this paper, I tried to keep a neutral stance and avoid any further attention. I am not a registered voter in Kastoria, nor is anyone in my close family for that matter, so there is no question of political allegiance.

The Pros

The first major positive element of this thesis paper is that it is written in the English language. Initially I thought that this fact was going to work against me and what I am trying to achieve, which is the use of this paper by the municipal authorities in Kastoria for the betterment and modernization of the city while also to help them “branch out” to Europe. People who I encountered explained that the English language would be a definite barrier to the average citizen of Kastoria who does not speak the language and thus cannot read it. However, at the end of the day the global language spoken around the world today is English. This thesis paper (or sections of this paper) will be sent to multiple locations and governmental offices (the European Union for example) across Europe in order to gain fervor and further support for Kastoria. Parts of it can be used as tour guides, by tourists who will travel to Kastoria from abroad in the upcoming years. Municipal and prefectural authorities from Kastoria can use it to communicate some of their aims with other countries in Europe. Also, in the future, if in fact this project has a positive effect on Kastorians, is widely accepted and many of the ideas presented here are put into effect for the improvement of the city, it may always be translated to the Greek language so as to be able to be read by everyone.

Apart from the English language, and the fact that this paper may receive international recognition once completed, it also gave me the opportunity to meet incredible young people with incredible ideas for Kastoria, who were just not sure how to implement them or what exactly to seek. This paper serves as an introduction to a massive

product which is not solely improving Kastoria as a city and a community in northwestern Greece but placing it on the international map of Europe for all it has to offer. I truly believe that what I have managed to accomplish with this paper will serve as a motivational tool for all the youths in Kastoria, many of whom I had the honor to meet and speak with, and who really want to do the best for themselves, their families and of course their city. There are tips in this paper that may not provide an ultimate solution to every single career seeker in Kastoria, but definitely fills him/her with hope that their dreams may and can be achieved in a city like Kastoria in the near future, and of course for the long term, not simply for tomorrow.

This thesis paper also had a very immediate positive effect on me for many reasons. Primarily I was very excited to be finally dealing with a topic in my life that interested me. I have always believed in the power of rural Greece and have always been put off by the idea that there are only two or three city main city centers in this country that most of the youth flocks to in search for better education and jobs. Kastoria is my region of heritage, as mentioned in my introduction, so I feel like I am giving something back to my people, I am giving them the knowledge that I have attained over the past years both in educational institutions in the United States and Greece, to take back their city and transform it for the better. My dream has always been to spend time in Kastoria and visit my parents' village in Nestorio to see family, and thanks to this thesis paper I was able to achieve this to a great extent. This paper, as mentioned previously is an awakening call not solely to the people of Kastoria but to multiple, if not the vast majority of other cities and towns in rural Greece to use what they possess to become more appealing and more internationally recognizable. Greece is not only its islands and beaches. Greeks do not only have to depend on Athens, Thessaloniki and Patras for example either. There is a lot more out there and smaller cities can sustain themselves and grow economically. Its time someone acts so that others can see and appreciate this. I took it upon myself to create something that people will be able to use for years to come. Where some of my ideas can flourish into new ones, more accurate ones or more specific ones.

Finally, one more important thing that I noticed through my research and by conducting these numerous interviews for my paper and examining every last “nook and cranny” of Kastoria, is that despite the crisis and everything negative about it at this point in time, it still remains a very livable city and one that I would strongly consider moving to in the future, even for a short while. I enjoyed the people there, the ambiance, the food, the history and most importantly the peace of mind that one can attain, were even though you are in a city you also feel like you are in the country, simply by turning your head and looking at the lake, the surrounding mountains and the lush, green environment.

-Closing remarks and special thanks

Kastoria is a city of unquestionable beauty and immense potential. A city that could reach its optimal capacity for growth and development in the future if the municipal/prefectural authorities chase all the opportunities and make all the necessary changes mentioned in this paper. This demands organization, cooperation and coherence. Outdated mentalities and political grudges should be left aside, while fresh new ideas should be brought forth. I tried to make this paper as simple as possible, leaving complexities and over-exaggerated interpretations and analyses aside, to show that what is being suggested and what needs to change is not something unfathomable or unimplementable, anyone can think of it and anyone can understand its importance. If other places in Europe can achieve certain levels of growth and development, so can Kastoria. I am certain about this, just as I am adamant to see it happen. I want Kastoria to become the role model for other small and medium-sized Greek cities in the future, a success story that will positively influence other Greek communities in need of economic stability and growth. I want to show visitors that Greece is not only about its islands, beaches and Mediterranean climate. I want to show entrepreneurs and businessmen that the Greek economy and potential for capital growth and investments is not (or should not be) focused only on the main metropolitan areas of the country. Finally, I want to show the people of Kastoria that there isn't simply "hope" for the future, there is a unique chance to completely transform their city and take immediate advantage of everything it has to offer to better their lives and the lives of their families.

I put a lot of effort into completing this thesis paper, but I could not have done it without the moral and mental support of my family, friends and the University of Macedonia's staff at the Department of International and European Studies, my co-examiner Professor Aristidis P. Bitzenis, and especially my advisor for this thesis paper at the University of Macedonia and the MIPA program, Professor of Economics Mr. Christos Nikas. Professor Nikas guided me through this difficult and challenging process, believing in my skills and my ability to produce something noteworthy and something of unique importance. I would also like to truly thank each and every individual who met with me, talked to me, shared ideas, desires and hopes for the future of the city in order to provide me with their own personal life and work experiences within the Kastoria (and the greater Kastoria) community; each and every individual in Kastoria who I either interviewed or simply had the chance to talk to, made this paper possible. Their genuine support and interest in my work and their willingness to take time out of their day and personal schedules on weekends and weekdays, was the driving force behind my writing, and I promise them that their time spent with me will have a positive impact on their city in the years to come.

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