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Ethnographic Research in Border Areas



Contributions to the Study of International
Frontiers in Southeast Europe



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Edited by

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Cover Picture: the Konitsa Bridge

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UNDERSTANDING BORDERS AND BORDERING PROCESSES: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL FRONTIERS IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Ioannis Manos

Introduction

It has become common knowledge, when we talk about borders, to assert, firstly, that we live in a borderless and de-territorialized world where the significance of geopolitical borders has changed through the processes of globalization, the formation of supranational organizations, regional integration, and the power of cyberspace (the advancement and spread of information technology), and secondly, that borders have become more permeable via the constant movement of people, capital, goods and information. Some recurrent depictions of the above mentioned two views are the metaphorical depictions of borders as a membrane or a bridge. This represents a vision of the world that has been shaped by a capitalist, neo-liberal perspective according to which the permeability of borders is a current project that is desired and actively promoted.

Yet, the political reality across the world and the study of borders point otherwise. Existing borders have been undermined or eroded, new borders have been established, and others have been reinforced through ethno-nationalist aspirations and security concerns over terrorism and illegal migration. Novel dividing lines and fresh categorizations of peoples, places, relations and identities are the outcome of a functioning of new border regimes where borders act as techniques of classifying and ordering (Green 2013: 350). This ascertainment put an end to a kind of naïve optimism that characterized the early post-Cold war period and challenged us to acknowledge borders' complexities and emerging asymmetries.

Focusing on SE Europe, we could see that the expansion of the EU in the region and the political and economic integration after the fall of communist regimes have created a complex setting for border studies. Imperatives of actual or desired EU membership have led Balkan states' governments to develop new policies at the sub-national, national and international level, which, in their turn, have resulted in the opening up of borders, the relaxation of state controls and the increase of communication and the acceleration of socio-economic changes. Money and other resources have been invested in trans-border cooperation.

Yet, the idea of EU's borders, both internal and external, is problematically accommodated within the idea of state borders. The resurgence of old national/nationalist projects, as well as the creation of some new ones, have resulted into an increasing number of intense disputes over border issues between neighboring states, of which some are new while others are old and unresolved. The current tensions and conflicts in the Middle East and northern African countries and the vast waves of refugees and illegal migrants are perceived as compromising stability in the region and EU security. The (re-)emergence of extreme right-wing parties and movements denounces the notion of open borders and sees it with suspicion. Borders are connected with the notion of the protection of territorial integrity and national security.

Current state of border studies – The study of SE Europe borders

The anthropological study of international borders across the world has grown considerably, especially over the last past 10 years. This branch of Anthropology has gained greater legitimacy as a field of inquiry and has established itself as one of having global implications. Border studies are dealing with questions about how identity, territory and the state are interrelated in the formation of the self and of group identification. Within

this framework, their focus is on people who are living at international borders, on the politics of the state in order to create or reproduce the nation, and on processes that construct and de-construct social, cultural and symbolic boundaries¹.

Through the use of ethnography of a local community, they offer a unique view on the meaning of borders for those living there and the ways the latter affect their lives – socially, culturally, economically, politically and spatially. By giving emphasis on the local setting, they stress how borders are constructed, negotiated and viewed from “below” through the locals’ everyday practice. They also demonstrate the ways social relations transcend the territorial limits of the state and bond persons and groups across borders with cultural, social economic and political ties. Yet, the central thread that runs through both the individual case studies and the comparative approaches to borders still remains that of the nation-state (Wilson and Donnan 2012b).

The ethnographic work on borders in SE Europe² shares some of the previously mentioned characteristics with, probably the most central of them, the manifestation of ambiguous identities by the border people. This ambivalent border identity based on historical, cultural and social grounds is important for the understanding of the ways relationships among identity, territory and sovereignty are articulated and the role that border communities play in cross-border relations and trans-national cooperation.

Border studies in SE Europe and the Konitsa Summer School

This collection of papers has been produced during the 9th Konitsa Summer School in the Anthropology, Ethnography and Comparative Folklore of the Balkans. The 9th School took place in July and August 2014 at the Greek-Albanian border town of Konitsa, in Greece. Since 2006, it is organized by the Border Crossings Network (BCN)³ in collaboration with the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Ioannina and the Municipality of Konitsa.

The School offers a full academic programme with an emphasis on theoretical, epistemological and methodological issues in Sociocultural Anthropology. It includes various courses discussing the current political and economic conditions in SE Europe as well as border crossings and boundary construction processes. The participants are expected to conduct short fieldwork projects in three Balkan countries (Albania, Greece, F.Y. Republic of Macedonia), participate in the BCN’s publication series⁴, actively engage in local issues within the framework of applied Anthropology, and become acquainted with the border area.

The papers that constitute this particular collection are the results of the ethnographic work that was conducted in certain border areas and other locations situated on the Greek-Albanian border⁵, mainly in the areas of Konitsa (in Greece), Dervitsani, Gjirokaster and Korca (in Albania) and the trilateral border area of the Prespa lakes between Albania, the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia and Greece.

All studies have been carried out through intensive team-based fieldwork⁶ and should be seen as research reports rather than as solid results of a completed ethnographic research. The intensive character of this

¹ For the development of the anthropological study of borders and border regions, see Donnan and Wilson (1999), Wilson and Donnan (2012a).

² For a reflective account on the complexities and burdens of ethnographic border research in SE Europe, see Manos (2010).

³ See, <http://www.border-crossings.eu/>

⁴ See, <http://www.border-crossings.eu/publications>

⁵ For a further look at previous ethnographic studies on the Greek-Albanian border see Arrehag, Sjöberg, Sjöblom (2006), Dalakoglou (2010), de Rapper (2004), Hart (1999), Nitsiakos (2010).

⁶ See Clerke and Hopwood (2014) for an application of collaborative ethnography.

kind of work entails dealing with a number of challenges. Students that are coming from different academic backgrounds and different levels of study, and are differentiated by different degrees of acquaintance with Anthropology and hardly any experience on fieldwork engage into becoming familiar with the study of otherness and understanding the notion of borders and border areas⁷.

Fieldwork practice is part of the core educational objectives of the Konitsa Summer School since it is regarded as the fundamental mode for the production of anthropological knowledge. This approach has the potential to activate the personal experiences of the participants in order to push them to reflectively considerate and theorize their own modes of perceiving reality (Hastrup and Hervik 1994). Doing this in a research setting that, more often than not, is unfamiliar to them is a research strategy that serves the students' need to comprehend the method in an environment where they are expected to manage the contradictions and difficulties of the process. This concept of experiential learning of fieldwork that is employed seeks to combine theory with practice. It connects the knowledge presented and discussed in the classroom with the lived experience in the 'field'.

This collection adds up to previous research findings on ethnographic studies of borders in SE Europe that have been produced during the previous nine (9) Konitsa Summer Schools and published (or are under publication) by the Border Crossings Network in its publication series⁸. Let us briefly summarize some common topics and outline some of the main findings that will place the papers of this collection within border research in this part of the world and within larger discussions in border studies across the world.

We have chosen to refer to the following, deeply interrelated and ethnographically informed thematic units: a) living at the border – meanings and perceptions of the border b) ethnic relations and ethno-religious identifications c) cross-border movement d) minority identity politics.

a) Living at the border - Meanings and perceptions of the border

The nation-state remains a key contextual parameter and agent in the processes that are developed in border areas. State ideologies shape the meaning of borders and the way they are perceived and narrated by those living there (Nitsiakos and Mantzos 2008). The border enforcement and the current changes that are taking place in the area have transformed the understanding of what the border is and what it represents for the people living there and the neighboring states (Matsouki 2011, Poumpouridis 2008, Tsobanopoulou 2008, Tsobanopoulou and Apostolopoulou 2011).

The ethnographic record brings out a multiplicity of meanings and a great deal of symbolism. Greek Albanian borders have been perceived as an impenetrable wall until 1990 and then as being wide open. The border between F.Y. Republic of Macedonia and Greece has had a different historical course and has been imagined as a dead end, a bridge and a gateway to the Balkans, the latter from a Greek perspective.

Borders fall within different narrations; broadly speaking, one that follows the official national version and others that are closer to the local perspectives, though even the local perspectives have incorporated the national one (Antoniadou, Giannopoulou, Kapsioti 2011, Giannopoulou and Zervas 2013, Pusceddu 2008). Borders are secure as long as they are guarded by the people living near them. They are associated with marginalization, isolation and backwardness. These negative perceptions are countered by the high moral of the

⁷ For a review on the development of methodological and theoretical issues on border research in Europe, see Anderson (2010).

⁸ See the three volumes with proceedings of the Konitsa Summer School that have been published so far (Balkan Border Crossings 2008, 2011, 2013). A fourth volume is expected to come out in 2016.

border people because of the heavy national duty they have shouldered. Borders are a place to die for (Drinis 2008).

They act as both a symbol and a marker of division, separation and difference. The state is questioned, challenged and subverted by the 'borderlanders' and the forces that participate in the interplay. Various agents encourage development through economic activity (tourism), promotion of locality and appropriation of the physical environment and aspects of local culture such as artefacts, food, dancing, music-making (Krstić 2011, Pateraki 2011, Pistrick 2008, Rina and Lazaridi 2013, Tsobanopoulou and Apostolopoulou 2011, Verinis 2011).

b) Ethnic relations and ethno-religious identifications

Geopolitical borders constitute the agents through which processes of inclusion and exclusion are practiced and citizenship and belonging are determined (Giovannetti 2011, Ratcheva 2008). They are inhabited by mixed populations, various ethnic groups with complex ethnic relations, diverse ethno religious identities and intra-group differentiations.

The ethnographic work describes the ways in which border people view their identities in relation to groups they come to see as 'Others'. Bilingualism or multilingualism together with varying ways of internal and external definitions and classifications point to ambiguous and context specific identities (Bielenin 2008, Cassidy and Felis 2008, Kitsaki 2011).

c) Cross-border movement

Cross border movement is intense and follows legal as well as illegal routes (Boangiou and Matsouki 2011). Trade, cultural exchange, environmental national cooperation projects are some of the ways borders are losing their character as barriers and facilitate crossing (Vatavali 2008). Media coverage transcends the imaginary border lines and TV and radio programmes are transmitted across the border.

Illegal border crossers have used or continue using paths to either enter Greece or go back and forth to visit relatives or to work in the neighboring villages. Those settling in Greece close to the border or in the mainland describe the strategies they follow in order to get a job in Greece (Bardhoshi and Lelaj 2008, Dalipaj 2008).

Changes of names, baptism and adoption of Christianity or Greek ancestry help to gain a legal status and facilitate the access to scarce resources. Albanians living in Konitsa describe how they negotiate their existence as migrants, and also the degree of their Albanian-ness while they are working in a foreign country but very close to the border (Nitsiakos and Drinis 2013).

d) Minority identity politics

The politics of culture is practiced by members of the Greek minority in Albania in an effort to construct and represent a minority identity which manifests its national affiliation with the population on the Greek side of the border (Vlahaki, Tsintsirakos, Kokkinou 2013). Staged cultural performances that represent national or minority identity demonstrate a version of local culture that contradicts the national one (Gümüs and Acikdeniz 2011).

The staged version is organized according to the lines of national ideology and it is based on national imperatives where the national culture forbids the performance in border areas. The ethnographic documentation shows that in all probability the dances of the one side are identical or very similar with those of the dances on the other side (Pateraki and Karampampas 2013, Pistrick 2008).

Ethnographic research in border areas: The papers of this collection

The authors of paper No 1 choose the Greek-Albanian border town of Konitsa as their research setting and explore the relationship between hegemonic discourses of national belonging and counter-memory as expressed in the town's public space. They focus on the management of memory of the 1940's (including the World War II and the Greek Civil War) and examine how public monuments shape the ways that both the official and the unofficial memory is constructed.

Paper No 2 is based on fieldwork conducted in the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia and more specifically, in the villages situated in the trilateral border region of the Prespa lakes. The authors analyze how the area's location at the national borders affects peoples' perception of their lives and the choices they make in order to overcome the social and economic hardships because of the closed border. The papers focuses on the ways aspects of local culture have been commodified and represented to tourists and other outsiders.

Paper No 3 shows a different perspective, both thematically and spatially, of living at the border. The authors move in different field sites across the border line between Albania and the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia. Those include the cities of Resen, Ohrid, Korça, and the villages of Zrnosko, Pustec, Tuminec, and Stenje. They look for perceptions and representations of the border through family members with kin ties on both sides of the border and document the ways they experienced their communication during the socialist period.

The old city of Gjirokaster (in Albanian), or Argirokastro (in Greek), is the research setting of paper No 4. The city holds an emblematic position in both the Albanian and the Greek official memory. For the former, it represents Albania's Cultural Heritage Monument, as was declared in 2005 by Unesco, and for the latter the historical epicenter of the Greek minority in Albania. The authors examine the ways its inhabitants perceive the city and its space.

In the same historical and socio-political context, but closer to the Albanian-Greek border, paper No 5 discusses issues of local, ethnic and national identity as performed by the villagers of Dervitsani, a Greek minority village. In a deeply politicized area the use of the language and the historical past are perceived as means for making statements of ethnic and national belonging.

A different process of attachment to a place is described in paper No 6. The authors conducted their short fieldwork project in the town of Konitsa and the Konitsa Child Care Centre for Boys, which hosts unaccompanied minor refugees as well as few Greek boys without satisfactory parental care. Through intensive fieldwork, interviews and participation in the everyday activities of refugees coming from Congo, Afghanistan and Syria, the authors attempt to understand how do they experience both Konitsa and the environment of the Institution and what are the existing relationships among them.

Moving back to Albania, and the region of Korca close to the Albanian-Greek border, the next papers, No 7 and No 8, examine the social and cultural aspects of the physical environment. More specifically, the authors of No 7 examine how a mulberry tree has embedded itself within the daily life of inhabitants in the village of Boboshtiçe. They bring up insights into the identity –economic, cultural and symbolic–, and the medical use values villagers derive from the tree.

In a similar way, paper No 8 examines the historicity of the landscape, concentrating on the ethnographic case study of Gjonmadh village. It investigates the transformation which the landscape has undergone as a consequence of historical and political conditions that had affected the local communities' relationship with their environment, in the sense of their use and management of land and its natural resources. Consequently, it also underlines the symbolic aspects of the land use in the village.

The trilateral border region of Prespa Lake and the city of Resen, its administrative centre, in the southern border of the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia, constitutes the field site for the papers No 9 and No 10. In

paper No 9, the author reflects on the observations she made during her stay in the area and asks questions with regard to how the border and its sense of marginal locality affect the national identification process. Looking at the peoples' everyday routines, she tries to understand the construction of national identity and the image of the 'Other' from a bottom-up perspective.

The city of Resen and a historical building as one of its main tourist attractions serves as the metaphor for examining the state of the Turkish minority in the area. The (now-called) Dragi Tozija House of Culture but formerly the Saraj of Niyazi Beg is the point of departure for looking at issues of inter-ethnic relations and cultural diversity.

The last two papers bring us back to Konitsa, our initial location. They both delve into the town's economic and social situation in a period of political and economic crisis. They both try to understand its impact on the peoples' lives in a border region. Paper No 11 explores the ways in which individualism and market competition, on the one hand, and cooperation and alternative ways of living at a low cost on the other, coexist. Paper No 12 deals with the institution of family and its relation to business in general and family business traditions in particular and discusses the past and present challenges with which the families have to cope with in the region, and more particularly at the town of Konitsa.

Some concluding remarks

The study of geopolitical borders within the activities of the Konitsa Summer School has aimed at bringing out their multilevel complexity within the everyday social practices at the borders and across them. It has attempted to ethnographically show that borders are political institutions which have social and cultural implications in peoples' lives.

These studies ethnographically illustrate the ways various agents, individual and collective, use power to essentialize borders and present them as stable and natural so that they will appear as existing things rather than socio-cultural practices loaded with symbolic meanings. The amount of ethnographic data on bordering processes that is presented in this collection and has already been produced in previous works of the Border Crossings Network could form a starting point for a systematic study of borders in SE Europe.

Yet, we need a consistent body of knowledge to help us understand the processes of political, economic and cultural change that SE European countries have been undergoing. We do not have a comparative approach of the structural differences between various national borders in SE Europe, their sociopolitical and historical processes and their different economic realities and inequalities; neither is there any solid work between states and borders of the same state with different states. Our knowledge is scarce regarding legal and illegal cross border movement or cross border cooperation.

There is a great need for empirical evidence that could show the great variety and diverse processes of borders and border life, and which, at the same time, will be addressing the broader sociocultural, political and economic processes taking place across the globe. The current ongoing phenomena attest to the increasing significance of security issues, border control and border mobility, economy, and the construction of the state and national identity and territorial sovereignty. SE European borders require considerably much more documentation and analysis so that this work could be proved sufficiently and comparatively rich and adequate.

The experiential fieldwork-based approach to borders is an empirical tool with which the study of borders can be advanced and connected to wider interdisciplinary debates about identity, territory, sovereignty and citizenship. Having in mind the political importance of borders after 1990 and their centrality in the geopolitical changes that still occur in SE Europe but also outside of it, and the diverse ways they affect it (Islamic fundamentalism, migrants from Near East countries etc), border studies might be in position to illuminate the wide-ranging transformations these entail for the region and its people and to pose questions

about intercultural understanding and the kind of democracies nation-states or supranational organizations strive for.

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DISAPPEARED QUEEN AND COMMUNIST BANDITS. HEGEMONIC DISCOURSE AND COUNTER-MEMORY IN THE PUBLIC SPACE OF KONITSA AT THE GREEK-ALBANIAN BORDER

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The topic of our project is the relationship between hegemonic discourse and counter-memory (Foucault 1984, 93-100; 1994, 59-65) in the town of Konitsa at the Greek-Albanian border, as expressed through the official and unofficial discourse in the public space. The research focuses on the management of memory of the 1940's (including the World War II and the Greek Civil War). Fieldwork took place solely at the town of Konitsa. Our research question examines the issue of the relationship between hegemonic discourse and counter-memory, the importance of the monuments in the official and unofficial discourse, and memory's representation in the local discourse.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the entire area had been within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, and remained so until February of 1913, when units of the Greek Army entered into the town of Konitsa during the First Balkan War. Important landmarks that affected and shaped the local identity, throughout the 20th century, are the following ones:

- ❖ The Lauzanne Treaty (July 1923), which resulted in the population exchange between Greece and Turkey (1923-24), altered Konitsa's demographic profile, as Muslims left the town and were replaced by families coming from Kappadokia⁹.
- ❖ The Greek-Italian War of 1940-1941, as some of the most important and ferocious battles took place in the area. The Greek Civil War followed in 1946-1949, when the area had been under dispute between the Democratic Army and the National Army, especially in the Battle of Konitsa, that took place in the winter of 1947-1948. Since the end of the Greek Civil War, the construction of the "official" memory varies accordingly to the prevailing political power at any given time (Panourgia 2009, 122). More particularly, the political parties that dominated in the Greek political landscape from 1950 to 1967 trumpeted their victory by erecting monuments, and in the case of Konitsa this was exemplified by the monument for the battle of Konitsa as well as the statue of Queen Frederica.

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⁹ The population exchange between Greece and Turkey stemmed from the "Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations" signed at Lausanne on 30 January 1923. This major compulsory population exchange was based upon religious identity, and involved nearly all the Orthodox Christian citizens of Turkey, including its native Turkish-speaking Orthodox citizens, and most of the Muslim citizens of Greece, including its native Greek-speaking Muslim citizens. The Treaty included among others the Turkish speaking Orthodox Christians from Cappadocia, who settled in various parts of Greece, including the city of Konitsa.

- ❖ Two years after the Military Coup and the establishment of the Colonels' Dictatorship (1967) Monarchy was abolished (1969). In the town of Konitsa this became visible by the removal of the Queen Frederica's statue from the main square. The political situation appeared to be changed after the Dictators' fall, in July 1974, with the democracy's restoration, and K. Karamanlis's election as Prime Minister, although this change didn't left its mark in Konitsa's public space. Even after the United National Resistance's official recognition in 1982 and the passing of the law about restoring the fighters of the Greek Democratic Army and equalizing them to those of the National Army in 1989, the 'reconciliation' in the town of Konitsa could not be traced in the 'official' local memory. The reappearance of Queen Frederica's statue remains as to that day a constant source of tensions and reactions.

Methodology

The research took place in the town of Konitsa during the four days fieldwork. In preparing the fieldwork, we have conducted a bibliographical research in the local library, but also on the Internet, in order to get familiar with Konitsa's local history and the monuments via which the official discourse is being displayed. After concluding that part of our research, our team scouted and inspected the area, and then wrote down and took pictures of the monuments, placing them on a map. These monuments include: fountains, churches, busts, memorials, statues, sculptures, graffiti, mosques and other Muslim buildings, icon stands, a castle and a bridge. Moreover, we contacted thirty informal interviews with inhabitants of the city in an effort to find out which

monument they're considering as being important, which of them they can easily recall and which they forget. We tried so that our sample to be as diverse as possible, especially regarding the age spectrum. After all, our goal was to interpret our material through a discourse analysis.

Lefebvre's approach (1991), as far as the dialectical relationship between space and society is concerned, offered the impetus for new theoretical perspectives about how the space is socially constructed but also how social action is spatially composed (Giannakopoulos & Giannitsiotis 2010, 13). As a result, space turns into a mean for action, a lived space, a space of representation, a narrative text, a structured field of social relationships but also an interpretive code of attitudes and behaviors (Potiropoulos 2009, 804). As Rodman points out, space "is not

an empty container. It is politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple construction" (Rodman 1992, 641). Therefore, the interpretation of space can contribute in designating its multiple dimensions and at the same time the local identity's content (Potiropoulos 2009, 807).

Consequently, memory is a mechanism through which social space is constructed. According to Pierre Nora (1989), the 'Lieux de Mémoire' ('Sites of Memory') are constructions which serve in the need for a reminder, in an era in which what is considered memorable has decidedly strayed either from the 'great narratives' of modernity or from the post-modern discourse of a 'traditional' community, where memory's presence could be felt anywhere. The 'Sites of Memory' ('Lieux de Mémoire'), as an ark of selective memory, exist just because the "milieux de mémoire" ("mnemonic environments") are gradually fading away, that is to

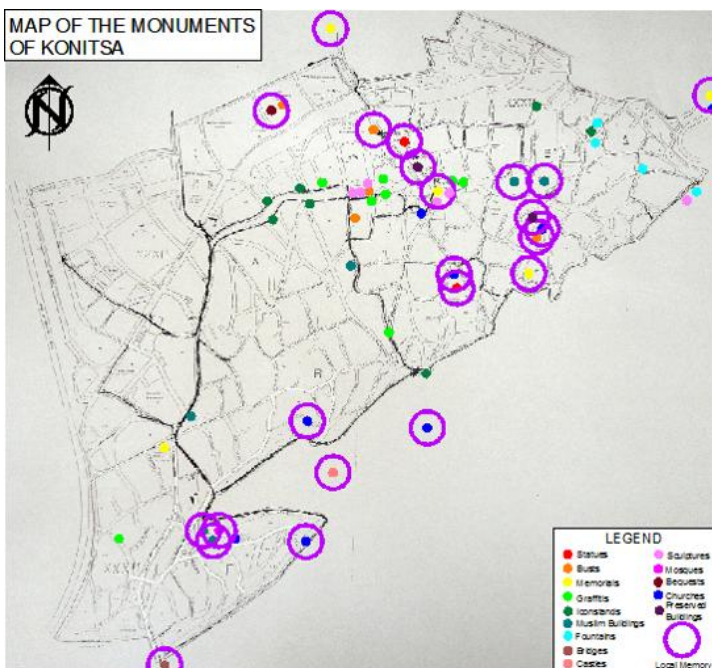


Fig. 1 – Map of the monuments of Konitsa

say, in societies where memory is constantly present, it is shaping behaviours, [ενοποίηση ορθογραφίας] without the need to be pointed out. In that sense, collective memory is what remains present from the past in the context of communities' experience, or what they themselves are creating with their past. Thus, memory as a dialectic system of remembrance and oblivion, converses with history — that is, a selective knowledge mechanism.



Fig. 2 – Monuments of Konitsa

Humans capture and represent their past by recreating, either collectively or individually, and negotiating their cultural identity in the present. Having said that, we could be referred to at least two types of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992; Connerton 1989; Ricoeur 2004): on the one hand, the ‘official’ ‘dominant’ collective memory which is shaped ‘from above’, and is transferred and solidified to the body social through institutions, discourses, monuments, statues, and performative memorial practices; on the other hand, the ‘unofficial’ collective memory, which is the social groups’ memory who have experiences in common but no access to the decision making centres. This collective memory ‘from below’ (Thompson 1966; Raphael 1972) often creates another type of discourse that questions the hegemonic narratives of the ‘official’ memory. This is what Foucault has called “counter-memory” (Foucault 1984, 93). The public historical memory and identity, is expressed and constructed by designating *Lieux de Mémoire*, especially by the erection of monuments.

Based on these considerations, we finally arrived to the point of posing the following question: “What is the monument?” According to Stavridis (1990, 169), “monument is one of society’s most potent ways for expressing its views about its history”. In Konitsa’s case, monuments can be categorized in various ways: according to their historical time (time of their construction), dramatic time (the time that they memorialize), narrative time (the duration of monuments’ narrative), whether they occupy a position within the boundaries of the celebratory center of the town, whether they are in use or not, the way they are received by the locals (positive, negative, neutral, mixed etc.), their architectural form and function (church, bust, bridge, castle, memorial), etc.

In this working paper we are going to turn our attention to two case studies: Queen Frederica’s statue and the memorial at the upper Konitsa’s cemetery. The reasons that lie behind our choice of those particular monuments are the following: both of them were erected in the post-Civil War period, their reception from the local population has been mixed, and, while the first has been removed and the latter still remains intact in its original cite, their location had been from the outset designed to lay within the boundaries of the town’s celebratory center.

Case One – The Disappeared Queen

The first case has to do with Queen Frederica’s statue. All of the information available to us based on the oral testimonies has been offered from our interlocutors, as there are no ‘official’ data. The statue’s location was at the main square of Konitsa. The exact time of its erection is unknown. It was first placed there around 1963, close to the current position of the “Pindus Woman’s” statue; later, in 1964, it was put on a pedestal in the

middle of the square; finally, around 1969, was removed by the Junta Authorities. Since then, it has been stored in a warehouse owned by the Municipality. The statue depicts the Queen and a young boy. The queen is sitting cross-legged, looking straight ahead, her right hand on her lap holding a traditional hat and the left hand embracing the boy on her side. She is dressed in a local traditional costume as indicated by the ‘σιγκούνι’ (‘sigkouni’).¹⁰



Fig. 3 - The statue of Queen Frederica positioned at the main square of Konitsa.

The child is depicted dressed in folk clothes, barefoot, reclining on Queen’s side. In terms of ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973, 6), the statue symbolizes the Queen’s willingness to protect all the poor or orphan children; that is indicated both by her stance — she is holding the child—, and the presence of the boy, who stands for every child in Greece during the Civil War. Furthermore, her attire points to her ties to the area, as more than one of the interlocutors recognized the local costume. Last but not least, the statue’s placement in the warehouse could be

interpreted as a way for preventing the public from having access to it, while it simultaneously minimizes the importance of the statue itself and the concept of Kingship, as

well as its effect on the local society. (The date of the statue’s removal is also important, as it followed the 1968 referendum the questionnaire of which included the decision to strip the royal family of its political power.)



Fig. 4 - The statue of Queen Frederica stored in a ware house owned by the Municipality.



Fig. 5 - Detail in the statue of Queen Frederica.

It is well known fact that Queen Frederica established a network of 53 child-cities around Greece during the Civil War, starting in 1947 (Danforth & Boeschoten 2011). These were institutions in which orphaned or poor children were taken care of and educated. It is also known that Frederica founded the hospital in the town of Konitsa, which is now the local health center, and that, during 1947, she and King Paul toured Northern Greece in an effort to appeal for loyalty to the Crown and the State Authorities.

According to our interlocutors, there is an ongoing dispute regarding the statue’s position: the possibility for the statue’s reappearance in the town’s public space. This came up during a recent

Municipality Council, a proposal has been made that the statue must be reestablished somewhere in the town. The Council was adjourned as a result of a strong disagreement, spreading out to the rest of the community, as it was captured in our interlocutors’ discourse.

¹⁰ ‘Sigkouni’ is the main part of the local women’s traditional clothing.

"We don't want Frederica's statue, not even as being part of our history. It is disgraceful." (Male, 21)

"How will it harm us? We want to have it reemerged not to honor her, but to remember her. Whatever happened we should remember it. The Queen was tied to the place." (Male, 61)

"At the site where now stands the Pindus Woman's statue, it was used to be the Queen's. But they removed it as if that was the problem." (Male, 65)

"I am against the Royalty, but the Queen should have stayed because it recalls another era. She did a lot for us. Compared with the Queen, what Karamanlis and Averof have offered and they gave their names to streets? Why must we blame the monuments?" (Male, 65)

"May she fall down and break." (Referring to the statue) (Female, 50)

"Neither hot nor cold. The institutions are not affected by a statue." (Male, 45)

"There was a statue that was moving back and forth, but I have no idea what it was." (Male, 33)

"Once upon a time, 'Friki' was here." ('Friki' means horror) (Male, 60)

"Whether you accept the Queen or not, the fact is that she is part of our local history. So this is a reason we have to put her back into the public space, but not where she used to be." (Male, 55)

As someone might notice, different communities of memory have been shaped in terms of divided memory. Memory seems to be connected and expressed to the public space. In this particular case, collective memory of the '**defeated**' [bold?] of the Civil War has never expressed itself before in the public space, as there is no monument dedicated to them, in the town of Konitsa, as opposed to other towns in Greece. Therefore, this community of memory expresses itself in public space through absence, by opposing to the reappearance of the statue, because this specific monument constitutes a symbol of the Civil War's 'winners'.

Case Two - The Communist Bandits

This case is related with the monument dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the National Army during the Battle of Konitsa¹¹. It is located in the cemetery of Upper Konitsa and was placed there during the 1950's. The cemetery has three layers. In the first one the monument is in the middle, while on the one side there are nineteen graves of soldiers, and on the other two graves of priests. In the second layer there are eleven graves of soldiers and one grave that belongs to a local police officer, who died in 2009 on the line of duty. In the third layer there are only civilians' graves. Twenty-seven out of all the graves belonging to the soldiers dated back to the period from December of 1947 until August of 1948, and the other three dated to 29-30th of October 1940. As for the monument, one could observe a column that has been placed on a two steps pedestal. On the simple white marble column there is the following inscription: ΕΙΣ ΜΝΗΜΗΝ ΤΩΝ ΠΕΣΟΝΤΩΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ



Fig. 6 - The cemetery of Upper Konitsa.

¹¹ The battle of Konitsa was one of the most critical battles of the Greek Civil War. On December 25, 1947, the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE) besieged Konitsa in order to proclaim the town, capital of the "Government of the Mountain". The battle lasted until January 1948, leading to the defeat of the Democratic Army of Greece, a fact that constituted one of the key factors to the eventual outcome of the Civil War.

ΗΡΩΙΚΗΝ ΜΑΧΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΚΟΝΙΤΣΗΣ ΤΗΝ 25 12 47 ΕΝΑΝΤΙΟΝ ΤΩΝ ΚΟΜΜΟΥΝΙΣΤΟΣΥΜΟΡΙΤΩΝ ΕΧΘΡΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΔΟΣ.¹² On the top of the monument there is a commemorative red flame that burns inside a cauldron.



Fig. 7 - The monument is dedicated to the fallen soldiers of the National Army during the Battle of Konitsa.

The monument is formed in strict rectangular shapes and is aesthetically conservative as it follows the simplistic style of military sculpture. It is positioned at the center of the cemetery on a higher plane in order to be visible to everyone. As a result, it is an imposing monument that dominates over the surrounding space. It is important to note here that the presence of the monument makes it appear as if all of the fallen died in the battle of Konitsa, although there are three of them who died during the Greek-Italian War (1940-41), a few actually died after the battle of Konitsa and one police officer who was killed and buried few years ago (2009). Namely, on the police officer's

grave there is an inscription written by his mother stating «Το ένστικτό μου μού λέει πως σε θυσίασαν για χάρη των Δεκεμβριανών» (“My instinct tells me that you’ve been sacrificed for the sake of ‘Dekemvriana’”)¹³. This means that his death is immersed within the context of the Greek Civil War as a monument due to its connection with the “December Events”.

Even if this interpretation is just an assumption, the fact that he is buried with the soldiers of the National Army is still not accidental. He is not buried as a civilian but as a uniformed combatant. Moreover, in the first layer, adjacent to the right side of the monument, there are two graves of priests. That means that the monument is framed at least by two ‘official’ discourses: a ‘national discourse’ (army and police) but also a ‘religious’ one, on which the memory of the period dating back to the Civil War is structured and established. Furthermore, the monument itself seems to function on a diachronic level, as the ‘past’ (the glorious dead of the Greek-Italian War), the ‘present’



Fig. 8 - The inscription on the police-officer's grave.

¹² “In memory of those who fell during the heroic battle of Konitsa on the 25 12 47 while they were fighting against the Communist Bandits, enemies of (our) homeland”.

¹³ ‘Δεκεμβριανά’ (‘Dekemvriana’) refers to a series of battles fought in Athens from 3rd December 1944 to 11th January 1945, where the main opposing forces were, on the one hand, ‘ΕΑΜ’ (‘National Liberation Front’), that was mainly constituted by Communists and other left-wingers, and, on the other, British Army and Air Force units (see Panourgia 2009, 63-77, “The battle of Athens”).

(the dead of the Civil War) and the ‘future’ (the police officer) are joined together in a single, unified ‘official’ narrative. The monument also seems to receive mixed reactions from our interlocutors’ discourse, as it is revealed by the following quotes:

“I don’t consider it as a ‘monument’. Others do, others...” (Male, 30)

“It has to do with the Civil War, with certain battles that took place, but I don’t know.” (Male 30)

“In the cemetery, next to the church of Agios Nikolaos, there is a monument dedicated to those who have fallen during the Civil War.” (Male, 65)

“Is this a monument? What [have I] to remember? How I killed my brother and my brother killed me?” (Male, 72)

According to what we could extract from the local discourse, we are dealing here with another case of divided memory, which is constituted by different communities of memory. In this case, the collective memory of the ‘winners’ of the Civil War is expressed in the public space through this particular monument, since it represents the ‘official’ collective memory but also, at the same time, the ‘dominant’ discourse that prevails in the public space. Despite the fact that the monument is present in the public space, it remains inactive.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have tried to approach the notion of public space in terms of collective memory, in order to comprehend the dialectical relationship between space and memory. Conflicts in the form of opposition, confrontation, subversion, and/or resistance engage actors whose social position is defined by differential control of resources and access to power. Thus, our reading of ‘space’ was conducted in terms of social formation through a semiotic interpretation of presence and absence. In other words, we have tried to interpret space in terms of collective memory and collective oblivion. It seems that in case of Konitsa and especially in the cases of the ‘Disappeared’ Queen and the Communists’ Bandits monument, the ‘dominant’ discourse is consisted of practises related with divided memory.

There is evidence for the existence of a historical ‘settlement’ between the two types of collective memory. In both cases, (the monument in the cemetery and the Queen Federica’s statue) the monuments have no official use. That means that there is a kind of settlement among collective memories, an act of balance in the sense that the collective memory of the ‘winners’ is expressed in public space despite the fact that the monument remains inactive. Nevertheless, the collective memory of the ‘losers’ that remains without any explicit expression in the public space obtains ‘power’ and becomes ‘dominant’ by preventing the reappearance of Queen Frederica’s statue in the public space.

Furthermore, the diachronic element in the use of the cemetery’s monument indicates that the memory of the Civil War still remains alive among collective memories, though in a rather unofficial manner. Actually, during the 1940’s we had two separate wars, the Greek-Italian War and the Civil War. In both cases the ‘winner’ coincided with the nation-state, the representative of the ‘official’ discourse, opposed either to the external enemy or the internal one. As a result of this, the collective memory was heavily manipulated by the official discourse, and that was imprinted in the public space, by the inclusion and the equalization of the fallen soldiers within the boundaries of the same monument.

And now the time has come for one final remark: it seems that the town of Konitsa is not ‘talking’ about its relatively recent past. Consequently, there are still many open issues that are subject to discussion and research. This deafening silence is expressed in multiple ways in the public space, leading to a confrontational relationship between collective memory and collective oblivion.

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REPRESENTATIONS IN RURAL TOURISM: AUTHENTICITY IN PRESIPA LAKE REGION

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This paper examines how authentic and autochthonic elements are being promoted in the rural tourism representations of the Prespa Lake region. Shared by Albania, Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Prespa Lake is characterized by its status as a border region. Although its unique location and rich biodiversity might have been an opportunity for a joint effort in trans-border tourism, these three countries have done very little to collaborate on the development of tourism initiatives or to ease cross-border tourism movements – despite the establishment of a transboundary natural park in 2000 (Dragoti & Shore 2000, 378).

Overshadowed by Lake Ohrid, the Macedonian side of Prespa receives approximately 20,000 tourists a year (André 2011). A popular holiday spot in Yugoslav times, the Prespa Lake region is currently undergoing economic restructuring. Since the fall of socialism, deteriorating infrastructure has made it a difficult climate for prospective local and foreign investors in the tourism sector (André 2011). Nevertheless, spurred by rural entrepreneurs and local initiatives, rural tourism initiatives have recently mushroomed in the region, following a series of small grants from the European Union and a more sizeable one from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2012). These unique developments have made the Prespa area a particularly interesting case study for examining the creation and marketing of rural symbols and regional representations in the rural tourism business.

In the past two decades, the experience of the tourist has been the central prism of anthropological studies of tourism, which consistently define the object of tourist desire as the search for authentic experiences, for “a sense of the genuine, the real or the unique” (Wang 1999, 350-351). Yet, Jules-Rosette has argued that anthropologists of tourism have “overemphasized the role of image consumers [tourists] at the expense of the process of image creation that is a by-product of the tourist industry” (1984, 3). Bendix further claims that host societies should be analysed in their own right, i.e., both in terms of their response to the social, economic, and cultural pressures of tourism, and in terms of their own expressive culture (1989, 133). In this paper we have adopted Bendix’s approach to the analysis of tourism by placing our focus upon the locals who produce and reproduce their culture, and not upon the tourists who consume these symbols and narratives.

Regional Branding from Below: the unique case of the Prespa Lake Region

The development of rural tourism is usually dependent on symbols promoted by national and regional tourist organizations (Kavoura 2007, 398). Kavoura emphasises the important role tourism bureaucracies play in the representation of a region’s history and culture, through a conscious selection and interpretation of national symbols: “when tourism planning is organised by the state within the activities of bureaucratic organisations,

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tourism bureaucracy has a role to play in the presentation of symbols of identity which may take the form of nationalism” (2007, 398). Evans-Pritchard articulates this link between nationalism and tourism, highlighting that “nationalism identifies with sites, promotes them through tourism and consists of the vehicle to promulgate the symbols and the sites of a country’s distinctiveness” (1993, 27).

In this sense, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) presents us with a unique case study. Although the emerging tourism sector represents 5 percent of the Republic of Macedonia’s total GDP (WTTC 2014, 1), the country lacks a ministry of tourism or any large-scale umbrella national tourism organisation beyond a website that provides the most basic information about smaller regions like Prespa, but offers very little else. The Prespa Lake region further lacks regional tourist offices to supervise its branding and the development of alternative forms of tourism in the area. The processes of representing the region are situated firmly in the hands of local individuals – rural tourist organisations, entrepreneurs and community leaders.

This allows for the coexistence of multiple narratives emphasising the rural traditions of the region. Theodossopoulos (2013, 346-7) points to the need to analyse simultaneously both facets of ‘authenticity’ that coexist in tourism: “authenticity as originality or representativeness (as expected by tourists) and authenticity as tradition (as understood by the locals)”. By espousing Theodossopoulos’ concept of dual authenticity, a better analysis can be conducted of the agency of rural tourism actors, who emerge with “a tactical advantage: the freedom to escape from a strict and limiting definition of the authentic, and an opportunity to apply their own specific meaning” (Theodossopoulos 2013, 341).

Methodology

The goal of our study was to survey the diversity of representations of authenticity and tradition – from self-conscious, apparently constructed representations to those that appear unconsciously replicated.

During our fieldwork exercise, we visited a number of villages with different experiences of tourism – *Pretor*, a former youth camp popular during Yugoslav times; *Brajcino*, a recently developed eco-village tourist hub; *Ljubojno*, a former municipal town in the process of economically reinventing itself; *Dolno Dupeni*, the smallest village in the region and closest to the closed Greek border; and *Podmocani*, the biggest and most vibrant village, characterised by the largest private ethnographic collection in the country.

By choosing a mixed-methods approach, we strove to gather a wide scope of data in order to gain a holistic understanding of the multiplicity of narratives of heritage and authenticity in the Prespa Lake region. We used snowball sampling to recruit our informants, conducting twelve semi-structured interviews with two categories of tourism agents: a) entrepreneurs in rural tourism (the leaders of rural tourism associations, small business owners involved in the hospitality industry, and the owner of the Ethnological Museum of Podmocani) and b) rural families complementing their traditional income sources with rural tourism on a part-time or seasonal basis. We complemented this approach with participant observation, discourse analysis of primary sources (promotional materials such as brochures, videos, and web portals), and secondary sources (travel guides) as well as narrative analysis of regional representations in the visual displays *Stara Cesma* ethno-hostel of Ljubojno, and the Ethnological Museum of Podmocani.

In this process, we identified three distinct dimensions of the diverse regional representations put forward by Prespans engaged in the rural tourism industry. Economic development emerged as both a key ingredient in the imagined future of the region, and as the driving force behind the creation of the majority of regional narratives. The identities put forward through these narratives focus on an idealized rural life, centered on or around conviviality, hospitality, and an intimate relationship with the natural world. One specific narrative stood out from the others, emphasising multiple dimensions of culture and belonging: the Ethnological Museum of Podmocani, the only not-for-profit tourist initiative of the area.

Rural Tourism as Economic Renewal: Promoting Tradition through Modernity

We approached the phenomenon of rural tourism narratives expecting our informants to put forward certain dominant themes such as local specialties, recipes deriving from the thriving Prespan apple industry, regional folk costumes, and dances. We were surprised to find that for most locals working in the rural tourism industry, folklore and regional identities were secondary in their personal and professional lives. Above all, representatives of tourism businesses and associations expressed a distinctive desire to be modern and competitive within a European tourist market. The desire to standardize was expressed multiple times among private sector and civil society representatives.

We first noticed this tendency when speaking with Andrea, the head of Zdrufenjeza Razvojna Alternativni Turizam (ZRT), the association for alternative tourism of Ljubojno, who only mentioned representations of rural life and tradition in passing, when we directly probed him on the subject. He was preoccupied with developing his business model and explained at length both the importance of foreign investors in the region and the relationship they entertained with other rural tourism associations. He also stressed the difficulties of having a business relationship with the people from his village, emphasizing their unreal expectations of rural tourism. Andrea said:

Those guys in Brajčino had the Swiss cooperating with them, I felt sad that we were left out, even though I worked with them on some other things. (...) We kept an eye on project for investment, so we applied for 4 projects, and we got approved for three. But it was so sudden, a lot of people were asking us where is the money, but they didn't understand that the money was for investing in projects and that money does not come straight away. There was a lot of fight in our association, a lot of people felt disappointed and they left.

The owners and founder of the Stara Cesma ethno-hostel in Ljubojno also did not emphasize the unique nature of their accommodation, their folk costumes and decorations, nor the regional fare on offer in their restaurant, but rather the fact that their establishment had been given two stars by the International Hotel Association. They boasted the fact that the hotel had a fast wireless Internet connection, that each room was standardized with a TV, a boiler and a modern bathroom. Standardization was something the owner Atanasji aspired to –he was proud of the fact that they had recently installed central heating to remain opened during the winter, “like other international hotels”. He boasted that:

We have standards, hot water whole day, heating, there must be stars on this kind of accommodation so tourists can tell, you know, that we conform and have standards. That's why there are stars! We have traditional food, and a grill, television. We made business cards, also...

Ethno-hostel of Ljubojno

In a study on heritagization in the Nord Aveyron, Sud Aveyron and Périgord Noir regions, three emerging rural tourism regions in France, Bessière analyzed the desire to compete in a global tourism market as ‘an expression of the rural societies recently acquired capacity to envision their renewal’ (2013, 287). Rural tourism is seen as a source of economic development, as a breath of fresh air and dynamism necessary to reawaken a stagnant environment and slow down youth migration from the region. We felt the weight of this expectation throughout our fieldwork exercise, noticeably during our interviews with families who catered to or accommodated tourists on a part-time basis.



Fig. 1. Ethno-hostel of Ljubojno

The link between tradition and modernity is particularly interesting in the context of rural tourism. Bessière argues that, “tourism [is] a precursor of change and of heritage re-composition that mixes the old with the new, and contributes to the way in which tradition is incorporated into a new, transformative rural society” (2013, 286-7). The more tourists arrive in a region seeking authenticity, the less traditional lifestyles are maintained because of the economic and social changes deriving from the development of this business sector. Although rural tourism is still in its

developmental stages in the Prespa Lake region, we are seeing these transformations occur already. Thammy Evans, author of the Bradt travel guide for the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), highlights some of the economic transformations that have shaped the lives of locals: when discussing the possibility of experiencing homemade meals in the houses of locals in Brajcino, she explains “the next evening we ate at Milka’s house (now Vila and Restoran Raskrsnica)”, describing how a family offering part-time catering had now opened both a guesthouse and a restaurant (2007, 219). Locals that previously would have complemented their primary income from farming with an additional outcome from catering to rural tourists have already succeeded in transforming their economic base and leading more ‘modern’ lives thanks to representations of tradition.

Commensality and Conviviality: Rural Cuisine as a Regional Representation

The most important element put forward as typical of the Prespa Lake region was rural hospitality and commensality. Most villages in the area had established local women’s associations and alternative tourist organizations that catered ‘authentic’ rural meals and promoted their intimate link to nature.

Catering ‘Authenticity’: the Importance of Hospitality in Rural Tourism

Timothy and Ron have emphasized the importance of food as a regional identity marker and a pivotal element of the tourism system (2013, 99). They describe cuisine as an “intrinsic element of the broader system of cultural heritage, loaded with ethnic symbolisms, the passing of intergenerational knowledge, environmental determinism, enduring tastes, socio-spiritual practices, political power struggles, indigenous and colonial inspiration, and poverty and wealth” (ibid.). Blakey further claims culinary tourism has positive economic impacts: as tourists become more adventurous both in their palates and their interest areas, rural areas have an opportunity to capitalize (2012, 51). Food is an inherent element of rural tourism, helping local farmers, producers and tourism actors diversify their economic activities.

The importance of food in the Prespa Lake region has been emphasized by each and every tourism initiative and institution we visited. From an economic perspective, many of the families that catered to tourists on a part-time basis actively branded regional recipes, emphasizing the importance of regional recipes and the natural produce.

We had the opportunity of partaking in rural lunches and dinners throughout our stay, organized by ZRT, the rural tourism association of Ljubojno. The president of this association, Andrea, and his family received us on our first night with a welcome dinner. Each dish was presented individually, with an explanation of how it was prepared and that the ingredients were mostly grown in their gardens, in the traditional way. They presented a variety of meals in order for us to get a better understanding of regional cuisine: serving *Zelenik*, a pastry made of spinach, *selsko meso*, a Macedonian meat speciality made according to their village's recipe, *đuveđ*, cooked mixed local vegetables and finally a salad. The dinner went by punctuated with laughter and concluded with homemade wine. Andrea joined us, entertaining us by telling jokes, and refilling our cups. Certain regional recipes, cooking styles and local herbs were consistently presented by rural tourism actors-reflecting the current process of regional culinary branding occurring in the Prespa Lake region.

We encountered another element of pronounced hospitality on the very first evening, when we hired a local band to play traditional music in our guesthouse. Starting with the popular 'Makedonsko Devojce', the band continued playing an array of Balkan folklore and international songs, making a point to play a song representing each of our countries. The attention paid to the cultural sensitivities of each member of our group showed to what extent they wanted to create a warm and inclusive atmosphere usually associated with rural life. The images that were created and emphasised that evening revolved around the promotion of traditional and simple food, as well as traditional and simple hospitality (Timothy & Ron 2013, 101).



Fig. 2. Andrea: Catering 'Authenticity' in Dolno Dupeni

Altogether, the atmosphere put forward by the rural tourism organization that organized our meals throughout our fieldwork was one of utmost hospitality, generosity and conviviality. However, we realized during one of our interviews with Andrea in the following days, that the hospitality we experienced was a conscious act of rural and regional representation. He explained that he was quite cross with our tourist group at the welcome dinner, because we arrived late and part of our group was missing because they decided to do fieldwork on the border with Albania instead. He explained begrudgingly how it was not longer as profitable for him to cater for a smaller group, and how he was only cooking for us as a favor to another member of the association, Meri, who had organized our stay.

A 'natural' relationship with nature?

A second dimension of rural life put forward by members of regional tourist associations is the pristine relationship with nature enjoyed by the local communities. An element of this relationship was consistently emphasized in the rural catering they offer. As Andrea explained: "the way fruits and vegetables are grown here is so natural, it does not need fad modern labels, such as 'organic' or 'eco-friendly'." Aneta, who both caters

and cooks for tourists, insisted on taking us on a tour of her garden during our interview, explaining which fruits and vegetables are used in certain recipes.

Neither of them spoke much about the large-scale agricultural ventures of the region, barely mentioning the apple cultivation the region was once known for. Instead, they emphasized small-scale production, describing the closeness to the soil of local farmers and their personal involvement in growing fruits and vegetables the ‘traditional’ way.

Folklore Costume Displays as Authenticity Construction

A unique example of authenticity that further complemented our analysis of regional narratives was the private Ethnological Museum in Podmocani founded by Jone Eftimovski, a local folklore enthusiast. What started as a personal hobby four decades ago, developed by driving around neighboring villages over the weekends and collecting traditional clothing and objects from older generations, turned into the largest private ethnological collection in the Republic of Macedonia, housing over 200 traditional Macedonian folk costumes and over 3000 items including coins, jewellery, household items and furniture.

The owner opened his house to the public in recent years, advertising it as a regional museum that has become a destination for touring folklore dance troupes and regional schoolchildren and students. What made this diverse collection so unique was the fact that this museum existed and developed itself outside the standard processes of commodification of rural culture we have observed in the region. The owner does not systematically charge entrance to the museum, operating on a not-for-profit business model and out of what seemed to us as a sincere intention to promote the diversity of local cultures. The costumes represented there were Muslim and Christian, Greek, Macedonian and Albanian, as well as urban bourgeois dresses shaped by a diaspora experience – identities not typically defined for consumption by rural tourism.

Fitting into Richards’ (2012, 7) conception of cultural artefacts as “traces of the past, a story waiting to be told”, we defined this collection as a living archive of regional identities, one that is constantly fluctuating. It multiplied and expanded by registering the lived imprints of interactions with visitors and folk groups from different areas of the Balkans, who frequently deposit costumes, symbols and accessories. In this sense, nuanced and sincere representations can exist within this space, as it is a space designed for a counter-public of folk enthusiasts, rather than average tourists opting for the Prespa Lake region for family relaxation instead of the more expensive Ohrid Lake.

Jone, the owner of the Ethnological Museum, deplored the commodification of folklore by some rural tourism organizations. He explained that the ethno-hostel in Ljubojno displayed a collection of costumes that was not ‘authentic’, because they were not typical of the area, but rather of the villages closer to the town of Resen. The contrast between these two types of ‘authenticity’ coexisting in folk representations of the Prespa Lake region allows us to reflect on the nature of this concept. Wang argues that “objects or experiences are defined as authentic not because of their origin or nature, but rather because they are put forward as symbols of a constructed and self-conscious authenticity” (1999). Handler and Linnekin further stress that in both cases, the folk costumes are removed from their original context, and thus redefined and reborn: “those elements of the past selected to represent traditional culture are placed in contexts utterly different from their prior, unmarked settings” (1984, 280). Through this prism, the folk costumes put forward in both the Ethnological Museum and the ethno-hostel are equally authentic: in both cases, they have been consciously selected to represent tradition and are an inherent component of building a narrative of regional identity.

The Ethnological Museum of Podmocani: A living archive of representations



Fig. 3. Ethnology: a family's collection



Fig. 4. Village social spaces



Fig. 5. National Costumes of Different Ethnic Groups

Conclusion

The identities put forward through typical tourism narratives focus on an idealized rural life, centered around hospitality and an intimate relationship with nature. All rural tourism actors consistently emphasized the persistence of traditions on a local scale ranging from rural cuisine to folk costumes. As Blakey highlights, the local is emphasized as being “somehow more ‘real’ in an increasingly commodified and standardized world” (2006, 3). Ironically, traditions and lifestyles at the most local level are subject to transformation faced with the emergence of rural tourism, the benefit of economic transformation and the commodification of rural symbols. Our presence as anthropologists also plays a role in this transformation. As Handler and Linnekin point out, “the self-image of rural villagers develops through a dialogue with a variety of tradition-seekers, ranging from romantic journalists to urban nationalists, not to mention social scientists” (1984, 288-9). This paradox is precisely what makes the analysis of representations so important in the context of the Prespa Lake region, as the nascent tourism sector is developing a multiplicity of self-images in the process of defining itself and the region.

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DIVIDED FAMILIES: THE BORDERS' PERCEPTION THROUGH THE HUMAN SENSES. PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE FIELD TRIP IN AUGUST, 2014¹

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Mala Prespa is a geographical area situated in eastern Albania, at the trilateral border with Greece and the Republic of Macedonia. The region that includes Pustec (Albanian: Liqenas)² Municipality is located on the western shore of Upper Lake Prespa and along the southern edge of Albania in Korça district that borders with Pogradec and Devoll. The municipality's administrative centre is Pustec. A Christian Orthodox Macedonian minority population of about 5000 people and smaller numbers of Aromanians inhabit this area (Naumoski 2012, 12-19). The majority of the Slavic population of the area identify themselves as Macedonian.³ This Macedonian identity is stated in the narratives and can be seen in various apparent symbols, for example the wide use of the Macedonian flag (cf. the discussion of flags as 'key symbols' of identity⁴).

According to H. Donnan and T. M. Wilson (2010), the *border* is a complex phenomenon and one could analyze it in terms of three conceptual spaces: a) 'international frontiers' (areas of negotiation among cultures); b) border areas, that extend beyond borderlines (the wider zone along the Albanian-Greek border could be

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¹ This is a work-in-progress report prepared on the basis of field research that took place in that particular area of the Macedonian-Albanian borders between the 1st and 4th of August 2014 within the framework of Konitsa Summer School in Anthropology. As such, along with the data, it puts forth our first impressions regarding our initial findings as well as some unresolved issues. The latter ones would either be elucidated or they would be excluded from the article's final version. This one will also contain long transcripts deriving from our conversations with the informants, which are important not only from the anthropological point of view, but also as valuable linguistic documents. The relation between the local population's language with the Albanian and Macedonian Standard Language and their conduct on a daily basis stands on a very peculiar sociolinguistic situation, so that the speech types that can be attested in Prespa exhibit great variation, from the distinctively dialectal ones (some elderly women who do not speak fluent Albanian), to almost Standard Macedonian (some young people who have received their education in Macedonia but they live at the Prespa area or they are visiting it for some long periods of time) with a plethora of intermediate forms. This is one of the questions we are hoping to dwell upon in the final version of the article.

² The region of Pustec includes the following nine villages: Leska/Lajthizë (Duma 2007: 116), Cerie/Cerje (ibid.: 119), Pustec/Liqenas (ibid.: 114), Zrnosko/Zaroshkë (ibid.: 118), Šulin/Diellas (ibid.: 112), Gollomoboç/Globočeni (ibid.: 110), Goricë e Vogël/Dolna Gorica (ibid.: 109), Goricë e Madhe/Gorna Gorica (ibid.: 99), Kallamas/Tuminec (ibid.: 107). In the rest of the article, we are going to refer to the villages by their Macedonian names, as our informants use to call them.

³ This is disputed by several Bulgarian sources.

⁴ Compare with Sh. Ortner (1971), where the state flag is interpreted as a summarizing symbol of great importance, in that it combines and expresses ideas regarding the nation and the homeland.

treated as such an area; see Green 2005; Nitsiakos 2010 with the bibliography on the topic); c) the borderlines themselves as demarcation lines. The Prespa region combines these characteristics, but the notion of Prespa as a borderline itself is closer to the third definition.

The Prespa cross-border area has a rich history that dates back to the prehistoric times. The 'Via Egnatia', which was constructed by the Romans, crosses the region; since the Roman times, it has been a tremendously important and rich in connotations connection route between Thessaloniki and Durres, and the economic and communicative backbone of the Balkan Peninsula throughout history (Gutsche 2010). On this road lies the triangle Korça-Bitola-Ohrid, an important trade hub during the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, a point of juncture between Constantinople/Istanbul with Western Balkans and Europe (Zachariadou 1997).

For the period before the World War II this region, together with neighboring areas, could be treated as a single unit, even though it had been divided between three states in the aftermath of the Second Balkan War in 1913. After the World War II the relations and the conduct between the inhabitants of this cross-border region were disrupted as a result of the establishment of communist regimes and due to ideological differences. The communication breakdown and the lack of cooperation were mainly due to Albania's self-isolation imposed by Enver Hoxha's dictatorial regime. This isolation lasted until the beginning of the 1990s, when the previous regime was replaced by a democratic political system, and the country started to re-establish the old and to build new relations with the bordering countries (Historia e popullit shqiptar IV 2009).

The topic of our research was "Divided families: the perception of the notion of the border through the human senses". Our field site included the cities of Resen, Ohrid, Korça, plus four villages: Zrnosko, Pustec, Tuminec on the Albanian side of the border, and Stenje on the Macedonian one. Because of our subject matter, we were looking for older people, who actually lived during the period of the communist regime. We've opted for semi-structured interviews through which our interlocutors could tell us various stories from their lives. The whole issue was very sensitive, because, during the communist regime, if a family had relatives on the other side of the border, that might have lead — and often did — to its stigmatization; therefore, they were usually prone to hide these facts. Thus, similar questions being asked by complete strangers would have raised distrust among the respondents, making them reluctant to communicate. In a discussion about the history of the village and the differences in the way of life between the communist period and present day conditions, we tried to figure out if the informants were coming from divided families or they have been aware of those families' fortunes.

Our research points were the following:

- ❖ Figuring out if the informant has some knowledge about the divided families and making him or her to unfold a narrative about them;
- ❖ Concentrating on the various ways of communicating with people from the other side which they were using during the communist regime;
- ❖ Focusing on the perception of the border and the amount as well as the different sorts of information that were coming from the other side of the border.

It's more than obvious that this particular technique raised at least one ethical question. Aren't the informants going to uncover information that would be proved potentially harmful to them? This problem could be easily solved, because we did not make records of the informants' sensitive personal data, as their full names or address. Sometimes, though, similar information had to be extracted from them. For example, there was a case of a villager who, apart from his surname, happened to have two nicknames – of course, we noted down that sort of information as it is of value for future deep research in the area.

Nevertheless, no connection could be established on the basis of our notes between this sort of information and the informants' stance toward the communist regime or existing political parties or even facts about the informants' contacts with citizens from other countries. In other words, the information we have

collected is recorded in this paper in such a way that its potentially harmful aspects have been dissociated from their narrators⁵.

Prespa's liminal state

The Prespa region is divided from the rest of Albania with mountains. That means there are not only national borders but physical boundaries too. For example, during the World War I, there was a Serbian outpost in Zvezdë, from which there was patrolling of the roads and the bridge over the river Devoll. Until 1924, a period when the area was under Greek rule, the official national borders passed through Suha Gora and Galičica. Its inhabitants, if they wanted to go to Korça, Bilisht or Resen, they had to cross it illegally. Afterwards, during the communist era (1948 - 1990), the whole of Prespa region officially functioned as a 'border region'. The locals were asked to which market they wanted to go: to that of Resen, Florina or Korça. "We said we went to Korça, so they gave us [meaning the territory and population] to Albania" (a man in his 60s, Pustec, M. M.).⁶ The passports of the locals had special stamps affixed on them; without those, they were unable to leave the region. The villages (Tuminec, Gorna Gorica, Cerje, Zrnosko) were fenced with barbed wire.

Nowadays the physical boundary divides the population from the rest of the country, making the people feel somehow protected. At least that is what we can decipher from their narratives. They were giving special attention to the fact that there are no Albanians in most of the villages. Some families are mixed, but the children had to be baptized even in the case that the Albanian spouse was Muslim.

"A.: There is no prison here, there is no one [in prison] here. There is no one to steal from you, no one. [...] But if you leave Zvezda, you know, every day... [...]. They kill one another like dogs. To kill anybody, is like killing a dog.

B.: Eh, we are a peaceful people here. [...] Every Macedonian in Prespa who has crossed the border of Prespa to Albania is very successful" (a man in his 50s, Pustec, recorded by M.M.).

At the same time, they were complaining about Albanian state's refusal to recognize them as Macedonians:

"Whenever I'm crossing the border of Prespa to go to Albania, I stop being Macedonian for the [Albanian] state. I can't declare myself as a Macedonian in the census. I have brothers in Korça who are Macedonians as well, but they can't officially declare themselves Macedonians; [they can do that] only in the case they're coming back here" (a man in his 50s, Pustec, M.M.).

These intense, conflicting emotions represent the feeling of living on the limit, territorially speaking. They say they have the right to be what they want to be only in the Prespa region. Therefore, Prespa functions as a liminal compressed space, which seems to the Prespans as being different from any other place, and that is because it's the only place they feel they are protected and being able of self-determination.

Yet, Prespa's liminal status can act favorably as well. For example, the locals were the first to start trading with Macedonia in the beginning of the 1990s, because it was easier for them to get Macedonian passports, as officially having the status of members of Macedonian minority in Albania (several informants, Korça, M.M.). At the same time, other Albanian citizens had to obtain visas for entering to Macedonia,

⁵ For the guidelines regarding the ethical code that are provided by the American Anthropological Association, see Fluehr-Lobban 1998: 195-202.

⁶ We are not providing the name of the informants. Instead, we're giving their gender, approximate age, the place that they have been interviewed and the initial letters of the interviewers' names: A. Ch. for Alexandra Chivarzina, M. M. for Maxim Makartsev.

something that wasn't particularly easy at that time. The ties between Prespans and Macedonia became even stronger during the following decade.

Building relations with Macedonia during the early post communist period was easier because of the family ties the Prespan Macedonians had with many of those living at the other side of the borders. Many of them have migrated there, have houses in Macedonia, and have children studying there. The Pustec municipality's current policy is to return the Slavic names, and this is the reason why in the relevant maps there exist both Macedonian and Albanian villages' names.¹⁵

We would now like to turn to the stories about divided families during the period of the communist rule, and that is because the current situation has to some extent been the product of that previous era.

Narrating about divided families

The experiences of this border area's inhabitants have been extremely painful; therefore, it is very difficult for them to put those into words. We are going to reproduce here several narratives that illustrate their personal and collective memories of the events.

1. In Pustec a mother had died leaving behind her four children (it is hard to trace this story back because the informant did not give us any time reference due to the circumstances of our field that are explained in more detail above). A family could hardly survive during the war. When the borders were closed, it happened that the elder brother (13 years old), a shepherd, was on Yugoslavian soil. The Yugoslavian government helped the boy to find some of its relatives on their side, but the fugitive's family in Albania was deported to the central part of the country for 17 years. The members of the family did not manage to meet each other until the 1990s; more than forty years had elapsed since their initial separation (a woman in her 60s, Zrnosko, A.Ch.).
2. During the World War II, many young people became partisans. The Macedonians would join the Macedonian organizations and the Albanians would join the Albanian ones. After 1948, those young men who were still remaining on the Macedonian side weren't allowed to see their relatives. One of the brothers of a big family resided at Tuminec who had been married in Macedonia was forced to remain there, and because of the policy regarding borders it was not permitted to him to reunite with the rest of his relatives. In the late '80s, when the local population got the opportunity to issue visas for passing the borders, one of his sisters obtained one and came to see her brother in Resen. At the time, he has been paralyzed, so he wasn't able to move and to travel. During the 1990's, when the whole visa-issuing process for Macedonia was significantly simplified, unfortunately he had already passed away, so it turned out that her sister had had a unique opportunity to visit him (a man in his 40s, Korça, A. Ch.)
3. The family of one of our informants in Tuminec (a man in his 70s, M. M.) was huge: he had ten children. One of his kids, the youngster one, fled to Resen in the beginning of the '80s. *"I had too many children, I couldn't keep an eye on all of them"*. His son was to become a successful clarinet player in Resen and to

¹⁵ This is not really a problem if someone knows how to move around. Our team had the following experience: we had at our disposal both Albanian and Macedonian maps of the region; on the Macedonian map, though, several parts have been cropped by the margins. In other words, for the northern part of the region we had two maps (the first with Macedonian place names only, the second one with Albanian place names only), while for the southern part we have had only an Albanian map. That would not have caused us any particular problems, but the locals preferred to use the Macedonian names and once we found ourselves in a situation where we were given in Macedonian a full set of instructions about our next station on route and only when we were about to leave the site did we realize that the instructions we have received did not match the map, as in the latter they are using only Albanian place names.

marry there a Macedonian girl. He could send letters back to his home even during the period of the communist rule in Albania, by using his wife's surname.

Border's perception and communication through it

The word for 'border' in the local Slavic dialect, *gradnica*, is a peculiar example of folk etymology. The word in standard Macedonian, as well as in most of the other Slavic languages, *granica*, goes back to the Common Slavic root **grana/*granъ/*granь* 'bough' [bau], and has developed a new meaning: 'verge, edge' (Trubačev 1980). The *d* that is pronounced in the middle of the word in the local dialect is an example of folk etymology bringing this word together with **graditi* 'to build'. In other words, it seems that the speakers perceive the border as something that has been built rather than just having the meaning of 'edge', as it happens with the standard Macedonian.

This notion — that of a 'built border' rather than just of an imaginary line on the earth surface — has been indeed based on the inhabitants' everyday experience during the period of the communist rule in Albania between 1948 and 1990. We've already referred to the barbed wire which not only demarcated the state borders themselves but it was also surrounding several villages within Albanian Prespa's region (Tuminec, Gorna Gorica, Cerie, Zrnosko). In Zrnosko, for example, it was blocking people's access to the lake. "We were afraid of coming to the lake because the border guards would have started shooting at us" (a man in his 50s, Zrnosko, A. Ch.). In this case, the state's role in controlling the cosmopolitics through the borderline is obvious enough (Pheng & Robbins 1998).

And now we are going to turn our attention to the different ways the members of the divided families were communicating between them, as well as to other ways through which they were getting information from the other side of the border/frontier.

It was hardly possible to making phone calls from Albania abroad, first of all because telephones had been very rare at that time, as several of our informants told us. Communication was possible through letters, though some of the informants claimed that the secret intelligence was reading the letters. For example, we could recall here the story we have mentioned above, of a fugitive who was writing letters back to his home by using his wife's name.

Letters were also the medium by which it was possible for them even to arrange a meeting at a specific place at Gorna Gorica. Exactly on the border area there was a meeting point where members of the separated families could come to seeing each other. Our informants told us that an armed man of the military was watching them the whole time. However, some of them denied that such a place ever existed. Of course, the situation was gradually changing; for example, in the late 1980s (according to several informants) it was possible for the inhabitants to obtain a visa for Yugoslavia (the longest period was for one month); nevertheless, the place at Gorna Gorica was previously their only opportunity to meet each other.

Apart from the personal communication, there have been other ways for them to obtain information, and even some artifacts or products from abroad. TV sets are the first of them. The approach of the Albanian authorities towards their citizens' watching foreign television programs was gradually changing; in the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s many of them had hidden antennas under their roofs. From the various programs that the Yugoslav television was broadcasting, before anything else, they have been watching news and music. Nevertheless, one of us has been told a story about a guy who sang an Italian song from Italian television; he was heard, sent to court and then to a concentration camp (a man in his 70s, Korča, M.M.)

In the beginning of the 1980s, in Pustec, boys would run to the lake's shores in secrecy to listen to the music that was coming from a Yugoslav disco from the other side of the shore. They would also collect bottles brought by the waves and then use them to decorate their houses. Allegedly, the Albanian intelligence, the

omnipotent Sigurimi, exhibited great interest in those bottles and their agents were trying to confiscate them as soon as they would gather any relevant information (a man in his 50s, Pustec, M.M.).

In the end of the 1980s, when the opportunity for obtaining a visa and going to Yugoslavia arised, those who did so would have brought back home many things. One of our informants went to Pančevo in Serbia, where the other members of his family were established after the borders have been demarcated, and brought back with him two cassette players with music cassettes (a man in his 60s, Pustec, M. M.). At the border, the border guards confiscated the cassette players and kept them for several days until the intelligence could have checked what was the tapes' content; then, they gave them back.

To summarize, during this short three-days stay we have interviewed nearly 17 informants in four villages (on the Albanian side in Prespa: Zrnosko/Zaroshkë, Pustec/Liqenas, Tuminec/ Kallamas; one village in Macedonian Prespa – Stenje) and three cities (Ohrid, Resen, Korça). There were many informants with their private stories, stories about the neighbors' families narrated in a way close to legends. They use the genre of narrative that is difficult to elicit but possible to record. We have found that there had been different means of communication including letters and meeting points (Gorna Gorica). People used to receive information about the rest of the world collecting even nonverbal symbols of a different way of life floating from the other coast (bottles, sounds of the disco). Some informants perceived the border as a glass matter or a wall, dividing one people.

As a preliminary conclusion, we would like to claim that, despite the fact that the intentions of Albania's communist leaders were very close to making Albania's border impenetrable, at least as to how it looks like from today's perspective, ("It was like Albania was not really there, that there was nothing there, a 'hole', 'a void'" – Myrivili 2004, 20), they by no means did manage to turn the region into a black hole. The communication with the people from the other side of the borders was still possible.

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PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE CASE OF GJIROKASTER'S OLD CITY

Sofia Moutafi * & Sofia Pardali

Abstract

This paper analyzes the different perceptions of cultural heritage; in particular, it is focused on the case of the old city of Gjirokaster, which was declared in 2005 a monument of cultural heritage by Unesco. The paper is divided into four different sections. In the first section, we are going to outline the main purpose and the basic directions of this essay. In the following section, we're discussing the research methods and the research design; more specifically, we are focusing on issues of material culture related to the region, presenting the theoretical background of the research and, finally, positing the main hypothesis and the basic research questions. In the third section we're presenting the research data; lastly, in the last section we're putting forth our concluding remarks, which are related to our main research hypothesis.

1. Introduction

1.1. *The paper's purpose*

Our motivation to choose Gjirokaster as our field research site came after we read a lot about this Albanian town. In fact, many pictures depict the uniqueness of its old part; after all, this was the main reason for its declaration as a world heritage site by Unesco in 2005. Collecting data by interviewing inhabitants of the city and closely observing everything in the field would offer to us useful information for achieving our research objectives. In other words, we've tried to find several ways of addressing our main research question: how do the inhabitants of Gjirokaster perceive the fact that the old part of their city is a cultural heritage monument? Furthermore, an interesting issue to be explored was the following one: which sort of value —the cultural or the economic one— is more meaningful and important to them? Our interviewees were mainly the inhabitants of the old town, people of different age, gender and nationality. We conducted three formal, semi-structured interviews and around twenty informal ones; we used the method of participant observation and took many photographs.

1.2. *Main issues raised*

What we could learn through our research concerns the different perceptions about the value of the cultural heritage, and how identities are reflected in, and interact with, the cultural landscape, especially the houses [local architecture]. More particularly, it was thought-provoking to find out if the way the inhabitants of Gjirokaster perceive the traditional architecture of their houses, dated from the period of the Ottoman Empire, is related more or exclusively with emotion or economical reasoning, but also how they imagine the development

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of their home city. This is a very interesting theoretical angle since it could set forth different ways through which to understand how cultural heritage integrates into the present local population's living practices. For this reason, in this paper data is categorized according to the economic and the cultural value of cultural heritage.

Ideally, this work would have been the result of long field research, but this is impossible due to practical limitations. Therefore, this is not an exhaustive study of an ethnographic case; rather, it is an ambitious effort at creating an acceptable analytical framework and suggesting possible lines of discussion among different views on the subject.

2. Methods and study design

2.1. Description of Gjirokaster's material culture

Gjirokaster is a city located in Southern Albania with a population of 43.000. It is situated in the historical region of Epirus, more specifically, in a valley between the Gjere Mountains and the Drino River, at 300m above sea level. The city appeared for the first time in historical records by its Greek name, Argyrokastro, as mentioned by the Byzantine emperor John VI Kantakouzenos in his historical memoirs, in 1336.

The city has often experienced turbulent times in the past – threatened by local rivalries, bandits and foreign invaders. This mixture of prosperity and insecurity has led to the development of an impressive architecture, of civic opulence and defensive grandeur, that can still be seen today. The world famous writer Ismael Kadare, in his novel *Chronicle in Stone* (1971) says of Gjirokaster:

“Everything in the city is made of stone, from the streets and fountains to the roofs of the sprawling age-old houses covered with grey slates like gigantic scales. It was hard to believe that, under this powerful carapace, the tender flesh of life survived and reproduced.”

The Gjirokaster castle dominates the town and overlooks the strategically important route along the river valley. The castle has five towers, houses, a clock tower, a church, water fountains and horse stables. Although the city's walls were built in the 3rd century A.D., the majority of the existing buildings date from the 17th to the 18th centuries. Gjirokaster is often known as the ‘City of Stone’ because its most distinctive feature is the locally quarried limestone. Typical houses consist of a tall stone block structure that can be up to five stories high. Furthermore, the city features an old Ottoman bazaar, which was originally built in the 17th century, but it was rebuilt in the 19th century, because a fire had been destroyed it.

Along with Berat,¹ the city was among the few Albanian cities that had been left relatively intact in the 1960s and 1970s from modernizing building programs. During Enver Hoxha's regime, Gjirokaster's old part gained the status of “museum town” and since 2005 has been declared a cultural heritage monument by Unesco. Its old city part has been inscribed on the World Heritage List as “a rare example of well-preserved Ottoman town, built by farmers of large estate”². More particularly, around 600 buildings have been registered as monuments. Since Gjirokaster's membership to Unesco, a number of houses have been restored, though the degradation of others continues unabated.

¹ Berat is a city located in south-central Albania and its old town was inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List in 2008.

² For more information, see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/569>.

2.2. Theoretical background of the research

The Old Town of Gjirokaster (also known as the ‘City of one Thousand Steps’) is considered a magical city with a tumultuous past. From being part of the Despotate of Epiros, to have become an independent principality under Gjon Zenebishi (1373-1417), then for almost five centuries having belonged to the Ottoman Empire, but also having passed to Italian rule during the 20th century, the city has experienced many rulers and has inspired poets, novelists and artists. Gjirokaster, a fine example of Ottoman style architecture, comprises hundreds of



Fig. 1. The Old Town of Gjirokaster
(Photo: Personal Archive of photos from Gjirokaster, 2014)

Ottoman-style tower houses, many of which have been registered as cultural monuments. The central question of our research that emerges from this historical profile has two main components: a) how these houses, as cultural monuments and consequently as cultural goods, are being perceived by the inhabitants; b) what is the relation that different people are developing with the notion of ‘heritage’, and, therefore, with the different heritage values.

According to Klammer, “Goods represent values, they are good for something” (2004, 151). Klammer, in order to make his remark more explicit, continues with a remarkable example: “A house is good in and of itself but it may stand for other goods like the good of ‘home’, ‘security’, ‘family history’, or even a cultural good when it is listed as cultural heritage” (2004, 138). Indeed, goods possess a great variety of meanings and may represent many kinds of value — social, economic, cultural, environmental, physical and so on. In this essay, we will attempt to analyze the meaning and the role of two of these different kinds of value, the ‘economic’ and the ‘cultural’.

Cultural goods are exceptional, and that is the reason why people treat them in special ways. From an economic point of view, investment in culture is considered instrumental in leading to economic growth and development. Therefore, an investment in cultural heritage must contribute to the development of the local real economy. More specifically, this kind of investment implies a large increase in revenue coming from tourism. According to Klammer, “economists highlight typical economic issues such as prices of cultural goods, the costs of procuring them, the economic impact of investment in cultural heritage, jobs, tourism efficiency, demand, government subsidies and so on” (2004, 144). In general, economists base their arguments on the cost/benefit ratio of a cultural project. Consequently, a prominent value is the economic one: “The economic value of a cultural good is what people are willing to pay” (2004, 148). This is referring to the exchange value of things and indicates that, essentially, all kinds of values are represented by the commodity prices.

Moreover, cultural goods also possess a cultural value. Immanuel Kant claims that:

“The quintessential cultural value of a good is its ability to evoke an experience of a sublime. It is the quality that causes awe and ‘stirs’ the ‘soul’. This quality is disinterested, it does not serve a social or economic goal.” (Kant cited in Klammer 2004, 151)

Furthermore, cultural values often encompass other values —aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic—, as well as notions of authenticity (Thorsby 2000, 28). From the moment that cultural values include social values, a cultural good, like a house, could represent a set of values, stories, memories and traditions

which have symbolic meanings for a group of people; in this way, they refer to more important issues, such as those of identity, heritage, culture and the like.

It's also worth mentioning that values may undergo change, especially so when people become knowledgeable about a cultural good. In this case, they mostly change their attitude towards it and tend to adopt a more critical view of it. For instance, a cultural asset that is included in the Unesco's World Heritage list becomes more valuable for people. Ultimately, it is a normative practice that people 'construct' values and/or adopt new ones.

2.3. Main Hypothesis and Research Questions

The organization of the research in Gjirokaster and the analysis of the data are based on the aforementioned theory of values. It is according to this theoretical framework that we posit our research hypothesis and discuss our research questions.

2.3.1. Main research question

How do Gjirokaster's inhabitants perceive the fact that the Old Town of their city is a cultural heritage monument and which sort of value do they believe is more closely related with their heritage (especially their houses) — the cultural or the economic one?

2.3.2. Research Questions

- ❖ How important is it for the inhabitants of Gjirokaster (both old and new) that Unesco has declared the old part of the city a cultural heritage monument?
- ❖ Has the latter fact changed or affected the way the inhabitants of Gjirokaster value their cultural capital? More specifically, did they change their attitudes towards their heritage? Did they develop existing values or adopt new ones?
- ❖ Has Unesco's presence given prominence to the economic and/or cultural value of the city?
- ❖ Do people 'invest' in their cultural capital for the purpose of generating economic gains, such as in the field of touristic development, or do they prefer to restore their ancestors' residences and live in them?
- ❖ Has the investment in their cultural heritage improved the local real economy?
- ❖ During the period covering the last nine years, have any restorations been realized in the old town of Gjirokaster and, if so, by whom?
- ❖ Are such activities economically or emotionally driven?
- ❖ In which ways do the inhabitants of Gjirokaster imagine the development of their birthplace in the future?

We drove to Gjirokaster and stayed in the Old Town for four days.³ We've managed to collect three formal semi-structured and approximately twenty informal interviews. We have also gathered data by observing and participating in the everyday activities. To be more precise, we walked through the old central market talking with the owners of the shops; we had many interesting conversations with some of the inhabitants and we visited cultural NGOs, discussing with their members the preservation of the old city's cultural heritage. Furthermore, we attended a cultural festival that was taking place for the first time in Gjirokaster; we watched a

³ The research took place from the 29th July – 1st August 2014.

documentary screened in the yard of an old traditional house; we visited all the traditional old houses, museums, as well as Gjirokaster's castle. It's worth mentioning that we were warmly welcomed and kindly treated by all of our interlocutors.

In the next section, we shall present the data of our research in Gjirokaster. More precisely, we are going to quote some excerpts from interviews and analyze the interview data, to describe the places we visited and the events that were taking place in the city during the period of our field study. Photographs and vignettes will offer an impression of these dimensions of our participant observation.

3. Presentation of research data

3.1. NGO 'Cultural Heritage Without Borders': Heritage as a Cultural Value

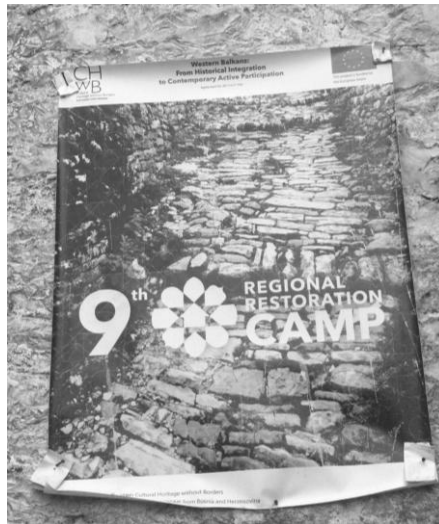
The CHWB⁴ is a Swedish non-governmental organization that began its activities in 1995 in Bosnia as a reaction against the destruction that the cultural heritage had sustained during the war. In 2001, they extended their activities in Kosovo and, in 2009, in Gjirokaster. We interviewed Elena, an architect member of this NGO, and she gave us information about the role this NGO has been playing in the old town.

CHWB organizes restoration camp programs twice per year. In this capacity they have partly restored 'Skenduli' and 'Fico' houses and two big traditional buildings of great historical and architectural importance in their entirety. The first one is called 'Babameto' and it was restored in order for its use to be changed into a hostel. In this way, through this economic 'investment', 'Babameto' is given the opportunity to his cultural value to take prominence. Elena argues that since 2005 the number of tourists has increased because the Unesco 'label' advertizes the region as a desired travelling destination.

Many owners wanted to restore their houses either because of an economic or an emotional reason, but they were not able to achieve their goal. From the moment that Unesco recognized the Old City as a world heritage site, people believed that they would have received funds by the organization in order to restore the destroyed buildings. Elena states that "Unesco recognized the special architecture of the houses that were built according to local people's needs", stressing implicitly in this way the heritage's cultural value. In this context, they have published several books for children in order to provide them with knowledge related to the cultural



*Fig. 2.
A poster on
'Skenduli' House
which advertises
the 9th Regional
Restoration Camp
realized by CHWB
(Photo: Personal
Archive of photos
from Gjirokaster,
2014)*



*Fig. 3.
An inscription on
'Babameto' house,
describing the
contribution of
CHWB to the
restoration of the
building
(Photo: Personal
Archive of photos
from Gjirokaster,
2014)*

⁴ For more information, see <http://chwb.org/where-we-work/>

heritage of their town and have proceeded in diverse restorations in the ‘Skenduli’ and ‘Fico’ house.

3.2. Traditional houses and their owners: ‘Skenduli’, ‘Zekati’ and ‘Fico’

We visited three of the most important houses in the old town of Gjirokaster: the ‘Zekati’ House, the ‘Skenduli’ and the ‘Fico’ Houses. The ‘Zekati’ one is the Old City’s most impressive house. It once belonged to Ali Pasha’s bookkeeper, built especially for him and his family. We entered the house but no one was there. We felt free to guide ourselves through its spaces and stay as long as we wished. After a few moments however, the son of the owner’s house who lived nearby appeared and started narrating to us the house’s historical past.

During Hoxha’s regime this house constituted an ethnographical museum, but after the regime’s fall all the precious objects were stolen and sold. “This house was full of treasures and now it’s empty”, he told us, his voice echoing with sadness. He didn’t ask us to pay a ticket, but when we were leaving his father, who was standing at the door, demanded with his fingers four Euros — the ticket’s price. His son felt embarrassed and he said, “it’s ok, give me three Euros”. In this case, we could observe two different approaches; the father wanted to make profit out from the cultural good [asset], but his son exhibited a different, rather sentimental behavior.

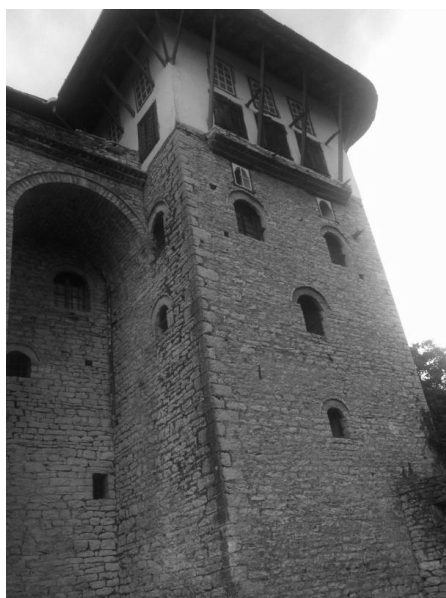


Fig. 4. The ‘Zekati’ house
(Photo: Personal Archive of photos
from Gjirokaster, 2014)

The ‘Skenduli’ house receives many visitors on a daily basis, and since it has partly been restored by the CHWB, it attracts many tourists. For nine consecutive generations, the house belonged to the same family—one of the city’s wealthiest—and it was considered one of the most luxurious, since it has nine fireplaces, a regional symbol of wealth. In 1981, the house hosted the ethnographic museum but in 1993 it was returned to its owner, who tried to restore it and make it accessible to the public at his own expense. He told us that no one ever helped him—not even Unesco—to make the restoration and he expressed his wish that some day he will be able to earn enough money through the tourist development to fully restore his house. In this particular case, the house’s owner seems to be emotionally attached to it: he realizes that his property possesses cultural value, and for this reason, he strives to earn some money from tourists (the ticket costs 2 euros / 200 lek) in order to preserve his cultural heritage.

The ‘Fico’ house was built towards the end of the 18th century, and its yellow paintwork and elaborate carving make it quite unusual. CHWB also made important restoration work in this house. We knocked the door and Lule Fico, an old woman that now lives in the house, warmly welcomed and guided us through the home. At the age of 20 she married into the family and she feels totally attached to this house. Even if it does not constitute a typical museum, it is open to every visitor who wants to see the interiors. The family does not really want to sell the house; in fact, their expectation is to convert it into a museum. The Fico family appears to be strongly connected with the house and does not wish to rent it out. Their wish to transform it into a museum is a way to pay homage to their ancestor’s memory and to preserve their cultural heritage by highlighting the property’s cultural importance.



Fig. 5. The ‘Skenduli’ house
The man in the photo is the owner
of this traditional house (Photo:
Personal Archive of photos from
Gjirokaster, 2014)

3.3. Transforming houses to museums: Enver Hoxha's childhood home

The Ethnographic Museum of Gjirokaster stands on the site of Enver Hoxha's home, where he lived until he became nine years old. The museum building was constructed in 1966 after the original house was destroyed by



Fig. 6. The 'Fico' house (Photo: Personal Archive of photos from Gjirokaster, 2014)

fire. The new building's design was based on the traditional Gjirokaster houses' architecture, and adopted many classic features that have been copied from particular houses around the city. From 1966 until 1991, the building was served as the Anti-Fascist Museum. In 1991 the exhibits from the previous Ethnographic Museum were moved into this space. The house has four floors, all of which are open to the public. The rooms are arranged according to their original use and decorated with numerous household items, folk costumes and cultural artifacts typical for a wealthy Gjirokaster family

of merchants or Ottoman senior administrators and officials who lived in the 19th century.⁵

We entered into the museum and we followed the stairs up. We paid the ticket (2 euros/200 lek) and felt free to guide ourselves through the museum space. We were moving into its spaces as if we were in an empty house and not in a typical museum with 'please, do not touch' signs and so on. We touched many artifacts of great historical and cultural importance that belonged to people who had lived many years ago (like a cradle dated from 1957) and we drew pictures of ourselves seated in one of the largest sofas of the house. We had the feeling that we were both a 'guest' and a 'visitor' in this 'house-museum'.

3.4. Cultural Festival of Gjirokaster (TRAKU FEST)

In an effort to demonstrate Gjirokaster's cultural heritage, the Albanian state in cooperation with the city's municipal authorities organized for the first time a three-day cultural festival calling on inhabitants and visitors alike to participate in several cultural events, to become familiar with the city's history and monuments and to appreciate their cultural value. Since there were no cultural activities in the region after the 1990s, being part of the Unesco's protected heritage program became the

starting point for new ones that began taking place again in the city.

During this festival we watched a documentary with social and political content in the yard of the old house 'Skenduli'. We didn't meet any tourists during this event, but we did meet Albanian students and volunteers: Loukas, a Greek young man from Ioannina and Spyros, a middle-aged man from Dropull, who were very friendly and eager to help us translate the festival's program (which was written only in Albanian) into English. They were all curious about this festival that was running for the first time in their city. Furthermore, during the



Fig. 7. The main hall for formal occasions in Hoxha's house - Ethnographic Museum of Gjirokaster (Photo: Personal Archive of photos from Gjirokaster, 2014)

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http://www.gjirokastra.org/sub_links/visiting_sub/visiting_ethnographic_museum.html

festival we managed to visit the tunnels constructed during the Cold War, which were situated under the castle and were accessible to the public for the first time. As our guide, we had a young Albanian man, who showed us all the different rooms and informed us about each one's purpose and use.

3.5. Case study

Shops and their owners: appropriating the old central market, or else, the cultural heritage's economic value

According to our interlocutors, in previous years the Old Town's central market did not experience any significant economic activity, because the new city attracted the majority of the population and it gradually became the center of all economic activity. Nonetheless, in the last five years many tourist-gift shops have opened, a fact indicating the economic and especially the touristic development of the city's old part. This economic development is probably connected with Unesco's decision to inscribe Gjirokaster's Old City into the World Heritage List.

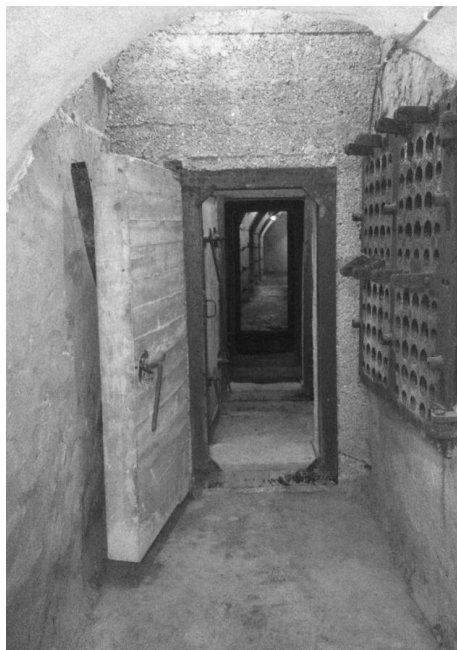


Fig. 8. Tunnels of the Cold War situated under the castle (Photo: Personal Archive of photos from Gjirokaster, 2014)

One of our interlocutors, Fereniki, owns three tourist shops in the old central market. She moved there from Greece after 2005, taking the risk to start her own business, in the hope that the declaration of the city as a cultural heritage monument by Unesco would have contributed to the touristic and economic development of the region. Her fiancé had also returned to Gjirokaster one year before her in order to open his own tourist shop in the old market, strongly believing that the Old City's newly acquired status would increase the touristic development and that he could profit from it.

In this case, we could observe that Unesco's decision determined people's will to return to their homelands and start a new business in search for a better life. For the same reason, many of our interlocutors, having a similar rationale, returned to Gjirokaster, since it became easier for them to find a job. This fact shows that the city's economic and cultural values are interconnected.

4. Concluding remarks

Economic and cultural values: Is there a peaceful coexistence?

According to some of our interlocutors, Gjirokaster will follow the same path of development as Zagorochoria have done in Greece, thus being transformed into 'authentic' and 'traditional' destination and, as such, a pole of attraction for tourists from all over the world. As a matter of fact, Unesco has contributed significantly to this, as it is functions like an advertisement for the region.

In addition, Unesco has demonstrated the region's cultural value by financing several restoration efforts. Furthermore, different NGOs based in Gjirokaster are contributing in order to protect the city's cultural heritage. Their role consists of securing the financing in order for restorations of houses with great cultural value to be realized.

We've also observed that the owners of these old houses wanted to restore them based either on economic or emotional grounds. In the first case, people have a vested interest in their properties because of their economic benefits and assess them on the basis of their cultural value that has now been recognized. In the second case, we are referring to the houses' cultural value and, as Klammer claims, "cultural values are the values that evoke a quality over and beyond the economic" (2004, 150). In addition, according to Throsby, cultural values "include aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic and authenticity values" (2000, 28). In particular, the architectural properties can appeal to an aesthetic sensibility and, at the same time, possess historical and symbolic value as they symbolize something of importance to the local society — in other words, a local cultural and historical 'capital'.

To conclude, according to the research data gathered, we've noticed that the fact the old town of Gjirokaster has been inscribed into the World Heritage List is perceived by the inhabitants of the city in two different ways, the economic and the cultural one, which they perceive as coexisting.



Photo 9. 'Neck' of the Bazaar in the centre of the old city of Gjirokaster (Photo: Personal Archive of photos from Gjirokaster, 2014)

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IDEOLOGIZING LANGUAGE, CONSTRUCTING BOUNDARIES: LOCALITY, ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM IN THE GREEK MINORITY VILLAGE OF DERVITSANI, ALBANIA

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Introduction

In this paper we are providing a first presentation of our ethnographic material collected during a short fieldtrip conducted during the summer of 2014 in the Greek minority village of Dervitsani, in South Albania. Our choice of the triptych of concepts —*locality*, *ethnicity*, *nationalism*— as a guide throughout our analysis is based on the material itself, which leads us to consider of how a minority community constructs and ‘entrenches’ itself while it is addressing these issues, especially from the point of view of language use and history perception.

Methodology

We gathered our data using participant observation. We stayed at the village hotel and spent most of our time in the community, talking with people (in Greek), accompanying them at their houses or jobs when allowed to, and trying to shortly integrate in their everyday life. We also carried out unstructured interviews, which usually led to personal narratives, recorded them when we had permission to, or, in case we weren’t, we textualized them in our ethnographic notes. However, all names mentioned here are pseudonyms. As supporting data, we also took pictures using a DSLR camera.

Due to time limitations, the material we have collected relies on the way our informants decided to present themselves to us, combined with few other ‘things’ (silences, gestures, inconsistencies, etc.) that captured our attention within a five days period. We think, though, that it is still important to try to understand why people, in order to portray themselves, have chosen to rely on some very specific ways and not on others. Also, of decisive importance was our first informant, who as a male introduced us mostly to the community’s ‘men’s world’. Consequently, the women of the village are not equally represented in this paper. Finally, all of our interviewers and informants were well aware of our academic background: three female University students, two Greeks and one Russian, who were speaking fluently Greek, doing a fieldwork-based research.

Language as a formative factor of Locality, Ethnicity and Nation

We reached Dervitsani by an ‘informal’ taxi, which was driven by our first informant, a young, 24 years old man, named Stefanos. The village is a fifteen minutes drive from the Albanian – Greek border of Kakavia. According to the people living in Dervitsani (*Dervican* in Albanian, with an officially registered permanent

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population of 1,500 villagers)¹ the village is the core centre of the region of Dropull, which consists of almost 40 villages,² the majority of them inhabited by the Greek minority, as recognised by the Albanian state.³ On our way, we could see that the road signs directing to these villages have been also translated into Greek.



Fig. 1.

Road signs set in Greek just outside Dervitsani: up showing the way to Argyrokastro (Gjirokastër in Albanian), down to the Kakavia, at the cross-borders. The middle one, in Albanian, is marked by graffiti, symbolising a Greek sports team.

few years ago, and even though it specialises in training teachers for the Greek minority's schools, many students prefer attending this high school instead of the local ones, because the courses are being taught only in Greek. After having received their Secondary Education certificate, University follows suit. Andreas, who had just graduated from the local high school, was taking private Literature courses twice the week during the summer at the city Greek city of Ioannina, across the border, in order to take exams and, hopefully, to study Physiotherapy at a Greek University. When we asked him why he was not considering joining an Albanian University, he answered that most local students do not: *"besides, the Albanian ones are not reliable. We have*

We were prepared to find people speaking both Greek and Albanian (code-switching) in their everyday life. But, already during our brief drive we've been told that Dervitsiotes [the people of Dervitsani] would never tolerate such a linguistic behaviour. During our visit in the village almost nobody spoke Albanian there. Even in cases of exogamy, when non-Greek speakers enter the community, they are expected to learn and use only the Greek language. The few people we met at the village not speaking Greek, or at least not well enough, were employees, all living at Argyrokastro located just a few kilometres away from Dervitsani. Holly Cashman, at her research on English / Spanish code-switching, has suggested that "language preference is a membership categorization device; it is a resource used by speakers to ascribe and accept or reject membership in groups, or 'collections of things', the negotiation of which constitutes practical social action" (2005, 307). So, having observed to the villagers speaking quite explicitly Greek, then we had to understand their choice.

The school system seemed an issue that it was promising and 'easy' to discuss it. Soon we realised that it was a *key* issue.

To all officially recognised Greek minority villages, there is a school system especially designed for them. The first four years of schooling are only in Greek, the next four both in Greek and Albanian and the last four exclusively in Albanian.⁴ Students at Dervitsani said they find this language transition difficult to keep up with, especially during the last four years. From the moment that Argyrokastro's Greek Pedagogical Academy was founded by Albania's Autocephalous Orthodox Church a



Fig. 2. Dervitsani's central square.

¹ Note, however, that the current numbers may be different due to various reasons, e.g. labour migration to Greece.

² See: http://dervitsani.blogspot.gr/2012/04/blog-post_22.html

³ On the Greek minority in Albania, see: Kassimis and Nitsiakos (1996), Nitsiakos (2010).

⁴ For details, see: Tsitselikis (2003).

heard that people pay to obtain degrees”, he added. Dervitsiotes’ claim that, being an officially recognised minority, they deserve to have a complete school curriculum offered only in their own language, Greek; the state, though, denies this as an option. For them, this is an act of injustice, offending their minority status rights.

In a quite different cultural context, Gerald Sider (2006) argues that locality is the result of the state’s, sometimes deliberate and yet lawful, failure to meet a community’s needs. The people may well organize themselves locally, in order to face the problems resulting by this failure, but it is a question –with a doubtful positive answer– whether they could ever manage to overcome the inequalities produced. Dervitsiotes, in constant search of finding solutions to the problems their local community of Dervitsani is facing, encourage their children to avoid the Albanian Educational System – and even the Albanians themselves whenever that is possible– and additionally to participate in the recently founded Dervitsani’s Youth Organisation; to raise money for ameliorations of public infrastructure and work themselves on them; and to promote their cultural traits.⁵ Therefore, their choice of Greek language is a distinctive “social action”, in Cashman’s (2005) terms, while enabling further local actions.

Yet, the locals’ actions are rather translocal too.⁶ Mrs. Angeliki, 75 years old, having lived her whole life in Dervitsani, explained to us that, “since the borders in Kakavia have opened, there is no Albania”. When in 1991 the Albanians were allowed to cross the state’s borders, many of them, minority members or not, migrated to Greece in order to find work and send remittances back home (see also Kassimis and Nitsiakos 1996). Eventually, a sufficient number of them moved permanently to Greece with their families. Sider (2006) mentions that this is a tactic highly met in communities unable to sustain themselves, raising their members to be a commodity for export, thus further reinforcing the inequalities that have forced them in the first place. As far as Dervitsiotes are concerned, there was a random return migration to the village in 2000-2002 and many of them set up there their own business or just found a stable job. Nowadays, though, many of them usually have at least one family member living in Ioannina (the nearest Greek city); despite the one hour it takes to get there and the car queue to cross the border back and forth, they prefer it instead of Argyrokastro for conducting all their possible activities: from visiting hospitals⁷ or attending courses, like Andreas does, to just having coffee with a friend. This does not seem a rational choice. It takes time, gas, effort, but for them it is a chance to socialise only with Greeks and speak only Greek. So, this may be evidence of a growing dependency on the Greek state, a side-effect to be expected, according to Sider, since labour migration undermines the community’s “social reproduction” (2006, 252), but it is nonetheless another state than the one they live in (which is not the case in Sider’s Newfoundland). This ‘turning point’ indicates that the open borders are not just ‘distracting’ their dependency; they are a boost to their ethnic identity and a continuous relation with what they consider as being *their* nation, Greece. Consequently, their actions are conscious, “social” once more, with specific targets. For example, Dervitsiotes talk of themselves as being “Greeks”. Actually, they are very proud of it, declaring that it is them –and only them– who have been maintaining the Greek language in its most “authentic” [archaic] form, even during the Hoxha years⁸.



Fig. 3. Dervitsani’s central fountain. Both constructions have been renovated by the Youth Organisation.

⁵ For more information, see: <http://dervitsani.gr/> and <https://www.facebook.com/DervitsaneBEpeirou>

⁶ On translocality in the Greek-Albanian border regions, see: Nitsiakos (2010).

⁷ Free access to the Greek National Health System is a right they have as members of the minority.

⁸ For a short profile of Enver Hoxha, see: <http://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/death-enver-hoxha>

Ideologizing language: Locality and nationalism through the language beliefs prism.

In terms of Linguistic Anthropology, the act of speaking, which means the use of the language, is a social act (Hymes 1964). Thus, learning about “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use” as Silverstein (1979, 193) has defined Language Ideologies, is fundamental for an understanding of a society’s structures and the cultural patterns in use within its context (Schieffelin et al. 1998). For these purposes, in this part of the paper we are providing some observations on how the people of Dervitsani’s minority village talk about their local dialect in opposition to other Greek idioms, and about Greek language in general in opposition to the neighbouring Albanian one. We are also offering some initial interpretations of these ideologically shaped linguistic choices with regard to the processes of constructing different identities and sustaining social boundaries.

In the interviews we regularly identified instances of people juxtaposing, on the one hand, the Greek and the Albanian languages, and, on the other one, their local dialect with other variations of the Greek language, for example:

- ❖ “We are more Greek than the Greeks.”
- ❖ “We, the *Akrites*⁹ [“people of the borders”], speak an older version of the Greek language. The *Akrites* are patriots!”
- ❖ “Here, we speak 100% [‘pure’] Greek, not *Arvanitika*¹⁰, as it happens in Igoumenitsa (a Greek city close to the Greek – Albanian borderline).”



Fig. 4. The village’s entrance; there is a “welcome” sign in Greek, Albanian and



Fig. 5. The village’s exit; there is a “have a nice trip” sign only in Greek.

The local idiom is referred to be more *variá* [“tough”] in comparison with southern Greek idioms. This idea is strongly connected with the whole discourse about Dervitsiotes as being the *Akrites*, “people of the borders”, and the “northern” people that are distant from the imaginary cultural centre where ‘Greekness’

⁹ In the Byzantine Empire, the term *Akrites* referred to the special army units guarding the eastern borders of the Empire (Cappel 1991). Our informants seemed to use it to refer to the people that live at the periphery, far away from the imagined national center.

¹⁰ Originally, *Arvanitika* is the name of a group of Albanian idioms spoken by the indigenous Albanian population of Greece (on *Arvanitika* see, e. g., Tsitsipis 1998).

resides. Dervitsiotes' perception of the Albanian language is characterized by the same pattern. When they are speaking about their language ideologies, they always stress the difference between the northern and southern Albanian idioms, using the same terms: *variá* ["tough"] for the northern and *elafriá* ["light"] for the southern ones. Their own 'northernness' and the Albanian 'northernness' that stand behind the fact of speaking a "tough" version of the language, are both perceived as the strongest and brightest examples of more general identities of 'Albanian' and 'Greek'. Dervitsiotes characterise both Greek and Albanian "northern people" as *skliroi ánthropoi* ["tough or strong people"]. The distinction is that their own extreme 'tough Greekness' is described in positive terms of 'authenticity', 'antiquity' etc., while the 'extreme Albanianness' is described in negative terms of 'aggressiveness', "Muslims' sexist regard to women" etc. Considering all these, it is possible to distinguish between the lexical and pragmatic meaning of the two words, *variá* and *elafriá*, which are used for describing varieties of the two languages people are using in their everyday dealings. On the lexical level, we can observe the resolving of the 'us-them' opposition, as the people describe "our" (Greek) and "their" (Albanian) northern way of speaking using the same lexical units; on the level of pragmatics, though, the meaning of these words is not the same. "Tough Greek" [*variá Elliniki*] and "Tough Albanian" [*variá Alvaniki*] as well as the linguistic behaviour of their speakers in the semiotic system of the Dervitsani's people have much in common. Nevertheless, their respective speakers are evaluated by them as profoundly different and are divided into two opposing categories: "we" and "they".

The application of this division could be better apprehended through the discussion of the following examples. Firstly, one of the most frequent features referred to by our informants while they were describing the local dialect is the sound /*ch*/ — one of the specific dialectical sounds in comparison with Standard Modern Greek. The sound is recognised as a borrowed feature (most of our informants said that it is of Slavic origin); yet, at the same time, they were insisting on its being the unique marker of their dialect and, thus, of their group identity. This case of a borrowed feature being used as an important identity marker presents us with another evidence of the group boundaries' constructive nature.

A second interesting example of the phonological awareness's exploitation for constructing 'authenticity' and sustaining the group boundaries is the discussion about the 'authentic' pronunciation of the region's name: /*dropul*/ (Albanian variant) and /*ðropoli*/ (Greek variant). We were talking with two men, considered of as Dervitsani's 'intellectuals'; one of them brought us a book, called "The Chronicle of Dropull" (Litsios 2008). The other one, after he had seen the book, told us that its author is pro-Albanian, that it is not a "good" [proper] scientific book and, more specifically, that it does not properly describe the etymology of the region's name. He suggested that the sound /*ð*/ is a very ancient one, and that it has always been present in the Greek language; "Even Homer pronounced /*ð*/, not /*d*/!"

He concluded by saying that Albanian language does not have at all this "ancient" sound, and, thus, the original name of the region could not be Albanian. Not taking into consideration Homeric pronunciation, but knowing for sure that our respondent spoke Albanian and that in the latter's phonological system there is the sound /*ð*/, we could suggest that we were dealing with a kind of "negotiation of phonology". The bilingual speaker mixes the diachronic and synchronic qualities of the languages and transforms his own language awareness in order to make it fit for supporting his beliefs about the language's antiquity, with which his ethnic identity is connected. In fact, the language is his 'tool' for constructing the sense of [nationhood and] community with the dreamed motherland — the Greek nation state — and for proving language's priority in defining the linguistic landscape of the area, with which his local identity is connected.

The discussed patterns of language ideologies belong to two levels — local and national. The former sustains people's local identity whereas the latter serves for the constant search on behalf of the people for their imagined "motherland", the nation state that is situated just across the border. Continually serving one the other, as indicated by Nitsiakos (2010), they construct an argument about how the local experience is interrelated with their ethnic identity and, thus, links them with a nation (Greece) — and, of course, not with another (Albania).

A Communist past to narrate

Having discussed so far ‘what Dervitsiotes do’ and ‘what they say about what they do’, we feel it is time to return the discussion to them. No matter how theoretically ‘correct’, expressing opinions about a community we first met and said goodbye to within five days can definitely be problematic. To face this challenge, we decided to include, in this last analytical part of our paper, the stories as narrated by the people themselves. The importance of personal narratives has already been acknowledged in fieldwork-based researches on Greek Ethnography in general¹¹ and on transborder mobility in particular¹². The focus on Communism resulted from the narratives themselves.

From the first few hours we have been talking with the men that Stefanos introduced us to. By ‘invading’ in the traditional ‘man’s land’ of *kafeneio*, we came to realize that rightist or even extreme ideas were not an exception in the rule; rather it was the other way around. For instance, Markos, a middle aged local, had studied law in Thessaloniki, had been living for years in Canada, and had been imprisoned during the Enver Hoxha regime. So, for obvious reasons, Markos was well respected by many locals as one of the village’s intellectuals. Discussing about the politics in the minority, he made a correlation between the newly built mosque in an Albanian-Muslim village nearby and the one the current mayor of Thessaloniki (the second largest city in Greece) has announced he will have constructed, considering both unacceptable and accusing the mayor of the city, “who after all is a post alcoholic and a leftist!”¹³.



Fig. 5. The village’s busiest *kafeneio*, a result of the return migration. School kids playing outside, before lunch hour.

We heard many more similar judgments; later the same day at the *kafeneio*, someone who was mostly listening to the conversation and not participating in it, suddenly exclaimed in anger “Oh, that Communist!”. He was actually referring to Maria Farantouri, a well-known Greek singer, who had been invited to perform in Dervitsani during the 1980’s and she received a permission to cross the then closed borders. Apparently, for the man in anger, only a fellow communist would be allowed entrance into the country: “You haven’t experienced Communism, we have! A Left government would destroy Greece!” or “Capitalism is hard, but it offers people a choice” were quotes we listened to frequently.

It is striking how they equate the Left with Communism, but, as Charles Stewart (2013) suggests, in periods of crisis and insecurity people turn to the past to secure – at least psychologically– their future. By the summer of 2014, when we found ourselves in Dervitsani, SYRIZA had already gained considerable power among Greek voters and was serving as the leading Opposition party. Having their interests mostly aligned with

¹¹ For example, see: Stewart (2013).

¹² For example, see: Green (2012), Nitsiakos (2010).

¹³ As a matter of fact, many people in Dervitsani expressed their discomfort about having a mosque “so close” to their village, even though they could not possibly listen the imam’s calling for prayer. They would justify their stance by exclaiming “They are AND Albanians AND Muslims!” thought to be ‘twice as bad’. If you consider that the specific mosque was outside the minority’s area and consequently ‘none of their business’, you can –only– imagine how outrageous was to think that a mosque would be built in a Greek city, even though hundred kilometres away and seemingly ‘none of their business’. It is interesting to mention that, firstly, there are already mosques in other Greek cities with Muslim population and secondly, they were not bothered by the existence of an old *tekke* [traditionally a monastery of dervishes] in the same Albanian-Muslim village. If language is the national boundary, we could distinguish religion as the ethnic boundary dividing them from Albanians, whom they perceive *a priori* as Muslims.

the right wing party of New Democracy, which was participating in the Government then, Dervitsiotes feared what would happen if next elections proved SYRIZA first. Given their experience of Hoxha's communist regime and taking into consideration that SYRIZA is self-categorized as a radical Left party, we could say that they denounced the latter, trying to convince us –the two of us voting in Greece– of the negative consequences to follow and, above all, to set establish order around the 'chaotic' changes gradually surrounding them.

In the aftermath, it is difficult to imagine what a relationship they could establish nowadays, themselves Rightists or at least anti-Leftists, with a "motherland" under a Left government. However, it is not the first time that the minority's interests are not congruent with the agenda of the state they nationally relate to. In Greece, the term "Northern Epirus"¹⁴ was constitutionally abolished in 1987 (Kassimis and Nitsiakos 1996) and most people in Greece do not even identify Dervitsiotes with a borderline minority anymore. Still irredentism –and, by extension, also nationalism– is ever-present in Dervitsani; old or young, the villagers have more or less been nurtured by this notion. "Northern Epirus" liberation, once a pan-hellenic desire, has been gradually transformed into a repressed and frankly utopian dream of the minority. But, talking of dreams does not necessarily subject us to the subconscious realm; "dreams are a source for agency, except when they cannot picture a future", as Charles Stewart suggests (2013, 23)¹⁵. Dervitsiotes definitely "can picture a future" – and we hope this has been made clear thus far by their actions and words. "If we [Dervitsani] were integrated in Greece, tomorrow, yes tomorrow, I would set up a week-long feast and invite the whole village!" one of our male intellectual discussants concluded in one of our many conversations. This may not be a plausible future to dream about anymore, but it stands as a "communal daydream" (Burridge, cited in Stewart 2013, 29) everyone shares who are wishing to eventually achieve more practical goals, e.g. a place in the Greek University or a temporary job in the Greek cities close to the border.

Finally, these narratives express the interlocutors' interest about their 'compatriots', whom they wish to teach like young children what is 'good' for *their* –Dervitsiotes' and Greeks'– Greek nation¹⁶. Whether their words are heard appears to be irrelevant here, since the "daydream" remains persistent nevertheless, even if "the location of Greece, the Greece in people's imaginations, always seems to be somewhere else" (Gourgouris, cited

¹⁴ "North Epirus" refers to the specific geographical part of Epirus, which Greece failed to annex it to its own territory, at the time when the borders between the national states of the area were being designed and marked, in the aftermath of the two Balkan Wars (1912-1913). It is obvious even today, after all, that the specific borderline that was imposed does not express some ethnic or cultural division; on the contrary, in a completely arbitrary and violent manner, it divides populations, who not only belong historically to the same geographical-cultural unity or the same ethnic group, but are connected with close bonds of kinship, a fact that conferred on the carving of the "line" a tragic dimension. In Thesprotia, Dropull and Pogon, but in Konitsa, too, especially regarding the frontier villages, the separation of members of the same family among the two states has been a common reality; and the cases of individuals who happened to be on one of the two sides for a visit and were forced to stay there for the rest of their lives, because "the border caught them", are striking in their tragic dimensions. Until then, the politicisation of this term has been persistently invested with an intense ideological and emotional charge, as it was inscribed with passionate irredentist content. So "North Epirus" became the "enslaved sister", and this picture was systematically cultivated among the lower social strata by official and unofficial institutions and apparatuses in Greece, especially during and after the Greek Civil War. The term's continual and emphatic use led to the establishment of the derivative "Northern Epirote", which, over time, started to denote a distinctive part of those Greeks who were living in that part of Epirus that had been included in the Albanian state. Once again, the division by borders of neighbouring villages is a very characteristic case: they are villages whose inhabitants were afterwards classified on the basis of this division. Those that were living outside the Greek territory have been called "North Epirotes", while the others, who were living within the Greek borders, remained simply "Epirotes" (Nitsiakos 2010).

¹⁵ Stewart (2013) discusses dreams occurring in a state of sleeping, but we make use of his paradigm here to address dreams metaphorically, as hopes and wishes.

¹⁶ We are expecting that this kind of conversations they held with us, they also have with the people they are related to at the other side of the border.

in Green 2012, 116). Their narratives¹⁷ eventually link their ‘ethnic past’ as a minority, traumatically displayed, with their ‘local present’, when they take specific actions towards Greece, and the ‘national future’ whether looming closer or farther away; like three-dimensional time, their identity is shaped by three components.



Fig. 6. The old Communist Party's headquarters in Dervitsani, now conveyed by the state to some of the residents.

Concluding remarks

Constructing boundaries in Dervitsani involves simultaneously the three conceptual levels of *locality*, *ethnicity* and *nationalism*. According to our analysis, these three levels cannot be considered separately, since they are forming a distinctive minority identity only when intersected. However, discussing this minority identity from several perspectives, we attributed to each –mainly for analytical purposes– the concept that seemed most characteristic, afterwards though relating it with the remaining two. These choices were influenced by our material as well as by our theoretical background; many other approaches are possible. Concerning our methodology, observing language behaviour, taking self-reports regarding language and collecting personal narratives seems promising for conducting yet further research in a minority community, and offers a chance for a fruitful collaboration between the disciplines of Anthropology, Linguistic Anthropology, Sociolinguistics and Oral History Studies.

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¹⁷ Especially the ones on Communism appear to fit the “recitation style”, as discussed by Green (2012, 111-119), constructed on a ‘pattern’ that intends to present Communism as “bad”.

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Photographs: Kotsira Eleni.

PERMANENT TEMPORALITY: IMMIGRATION, CONSTRUCTION OF PLACE AND IMAGINARY KINSHIP

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Introduction

The present paper's purpose is to present our findings during an ethnographic research exercise conducted under the auspices of the Konitsa Summer School in 2014. We will briefly present our fieldwork and research questions, the methodology that we have used, some of the main problems we have encountered during the fieldwork, as well as an analysis of the data we've managed to gather. Among other things, those data include the rethinking of our role as researchers.

The fieldwork was conducted in Konitsa, a town close to the Albanian-Greek border, during the summer of 2014. Very close to the facilities of the Konitsa Summer School is located the Konitsa Child Care Centre for Boys (Stavros Niarchos Foundation), which hosts both unaccompanied minor refugees, and few Greek boys without satisfactory parental care. Since we, as students in Konitsa Summer School, were sharing the same catering facilities with the boys, we'd had an intensive contact with them on a daily basis and that is how this institution entered in our sphere of interest.

Our working questions were: a) how do the (refugee) boys experience both Konitsa and the environment of the Institution in which they inhabit (for example, is it a second home, a shelter, a prison etc.); b) what are the relationships that exist among them. A further elaboration of these initial questions led us to the concepts of place / non-place and imaginary kinship, which we're applying here for a further interpretation of our collected data.

Regarding methodology, we used some of the most common ethnographic tools: observation (with participating whenever it was possible) and the conduct of semi-structured or, sometimes, even unstructured interviews. More precisely, we spoke with refugees coming from different countries (Congo, Afghanistan and Syria) and observed their everyday activities. We then proceeded by arranging interviews with the Institution's staff (the caterers and two members of the administration).

The interviews had been challenging from several points of view. First of all, we had to find the way for approaching our potential informants, since we were about to discuss some difficult and often emotionally charged topics. Apart from that, we also think that it is important to mention the fact that our research team originally consisted of four European, young women who have been enrolled in academic education while our informants were all young men, coming from African and Asian countries, whose temporary/interim situation was not allowing them to travel or to continue with their education. Acknowledging this we certainly do not want to imply 'European superiority' but only to outline the main differences in our current life situations that could have had an impact on the collecting of our data. Furthermore, our research group was composed by four persons of different nationalities, with only one of them speaking Greek. On the top of that, the majority of the

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boys had only basic knowledge of Greek or English, while some of them would speak French, others Farsi, and some others Dari (Afghan languages). The solution to this problem was offered by the practice of translation and interpretation: the Greek language speakers, both from the research team and the male informants, acted as interpreters, as they translated from the above-mentioned languages into Greek, and then into English. Thus, in the process, and because of the language barrier, some things could also have been lost in translation.

Besides the issues just mentioned, we also came across ones of a particularly politically and morally sensitive nature; thus, profiling the boys is not an option in this paper, in order to protect their identities. Personal information will not be exempted with the exception of details they gave us permission to discuss. However, in order to present the context within which we have conducted our research, we will shortly introduce some general issues regarding the boys' arrival and stay in Konitsa as well as their financial situation.

In order for them to come to Greece, they had to cross many countries –thus many borders–, by facing multiple difficulties and risking their own physical integrity. After they had managed to arrive at this centre, they also had to cross many cultural boundaries, since they were interacting with people coming from different cultural backgrounds. Apart from the presence of cultural impediments, there have also existed some thorny legal aspects, such as the lack of documents (e.g., passports). This basically means that they are forced to remain in Konitsa for years, stuck in a technical limbo of legal codes and regulations. These papers are not only necessary for permitting their mobility but also for social reasons, such as the school's attendance.

Moreover, it is important to shortly refer to the actual economic situation during the period when the fieldwork was conducted. The institution was facing some financial problems at the time of this study. A program designed by the EU, which represented 80% of the allocated funding, ended abruptly, putting the centre into a dire situation. At that moment, the refugees were living off of charity– for instance, they were receiving bread from the bakery and some vegetables from the local market. Because of the lack of financial resources, there was a shrinkage of the available foodstuff over the past few years; nowadays, there are only few people that have taken on most of the responsibilities. Despite this fact, according to interviewees, the relationship between the boys and the staff is generally amicable, with only some minor disturbances due mostly to money-related problems. Moving forward, it is important to mention that approximately two years ago, around eighty refugees were living in the same centre; nowadays, there are less than twenty of them. This erosion of financial condition also leads to funding issues for educational and social programs; for instance, there are no more extra activities for the boys, such as school courses, because the institution cannot afford to pay extra staff.

Constructing A Place

Tim Cresswell has defined place as space which people have made meaningful to them (2004, 7). It is also important to note that places are socially constructed phenomena. People build, construct and invent places out of spaces. During that process, they attempt to put themselves into that particular space or, in Cresswell's words, "a common strategy is to make the space say something about you", by adding one's own possessions or rearranging the furniture etc. "Thus space is turned into place. Your place" (Cresswell 2004, 2).

While conducting our fieldwork, it had come to our attention that some of our informants' actions could be interpreted as an attempt to construct their own place. For example, even though it is not officially permitted to the boys to paint the walls of their rooms, many of them have done it anyway. They were also filling their rooms with their own stuff, for example, things from their homes, photos and religious artefacts. Moreover, one of the boys had gotten permission from the centre authorities and has painted the wall in the community hallway. By doing so, they were trying to convert the location they were situated into more like a home for them and less like, as one of our informants said, "a prison or a jungle".

It is clear that by turning space into *your place*, you have invested part of your own identity into that place. That personal relationship or “subjective and emotional attachment people have to place” (Agnew cited in Cresswell 2004, 7) is one of the most important characteristics of place and it is called “sense of place”. To sense a place means to live it; a location is no longer just a location, it becomes an integral part of the self. For example, while we’re recalling some past events, we are also recalling the places where those events occurred; we are recalling to our memory the actions that we conducted there. In our mind, place constitutes an integral part of any memory we are recalling. A place can be lived through everyday practices: for example, our informants often play football or volleyball in the front yard, or listen to music and relax in the shade. But, even though they are trying to create an ambience that will remind them less of their difficult situations –e.g., uprootedness from their own home and family– and more of a home, most of them are still experiencing it in a quite negative way.

At this point, it is important to mention the issue of invisibility and visibility between the boys and the ‘others’ — Konitsa’s local population. While having conversations with some of Konitsa’s bars, bakeries and supermarkets owners, we realized that they were all, more or less, informed about this reception centre for unaccompanied minor refugees and about the boys who are living in that centre. People kept telling us: “Of course we know them! We see them every day!” But, even though the boys were physically visible, for most of the time, and for the majority of the boys, there was no real interaction with the community’s members except from being occasional customers at the local shops. It seems that, for most of the boys, involvement in everyday life outside the Institution stopped right there — with people being aware of their existence, but not really willing to build a relationship. That is one of the reasons why lot of boys felt isolated there and why they would rather, for example, buy some drinks in a supermarket and then drink them back into their centre, away from the local population, than to go and spend their time in local bars surrounded by ‘Others’. That could also mean that they somehow choose to be as less visible as possible, because they didn’t feel comfortable enough by having around them lots of ‘Others’. Basically, most of the boys got the impression that Konitsa is not *their* place or, to put it differently, they didn’t feel like they belong there.

The feeling of not belonging is strongly connected to their “sense of place”, or, to their “subjective and emotional perception” (Agnew cited in Cresswell 2004, 7) of Konitsa, as well as of the Institution itself. That sense is, for most of them, negative. In fact, some of them were referring to this building as being their prison. Given the fact that their status as immigrants is complex and complicated, their mobility (Kaufmann and Montulet 2008) is deeply restricted and they feel like part of their own humanity is taken away from them. An interesting example of this feeling comes to us from a conversation we had with one of the boys: “We are like monkeys in a jungle”, referring to the whole situation in which they were living, that made them feel more like being animals rather than human beings.

Konitsa as a Place vs. Konitsa as a Non-Place

Emotions and identity markers are always inscribed into places, as Miriam Kahn has claimed:

“Places capture the complex emotional, behavioural, and moral relationships between people and their territory. They represent people, their actions, and their interactions and as such become malleable memorials for negotiating and renegotiating human relationships. Places and their stories also become metaphors that are heavily relied upon during social discourse about relationships (...) It is impossible to talk about place, or to talk about how people talk about place, without encompassing biography (...)” (1996, 168).

Those complex relations between people and places do not have to be either completely positive (or negative), but they must be established. A moment in which there is no meaning, identity or emotions inscribed

in a certain place is a moment in which we could ask ourselves whether we are still discussing place or if we have entered into Augé's domain of non-places.

According to Augé (1995), non-place is a space which cannot be defined as relational, historical, or concerned with identity. In order to explain this statement, Augé offers examples of non-places such as airports, large transportation hubs, large tourist resorts and hotel complexes, or even refugee camps and asylums. What all these non-places have in common is the fact that they serve as gathering and temporary staying sites, facilitating the movement of people and economic goods. In non-places, neither identity nor history has been inscribed as a difference from what is happening in anthropological places (Augé, 1995). They are "crowded places where thousands of individual itineraries converge for a moment, unaware of one another" (Augé, 1995: 3). In those places people are alone, even though they are surrounded by hundreds of others, self-identification is not taking place, and relations are strictly contractual; a sense of place is distinctly lacking. Temporariness is one of the most important notions for non-places, while at the same time it plays an important role in connecting this theoretical framework with our fieldwork data.

As we have mentioned above, most of the boys didn't feel at ease in Konitsa's environment; they felt isolated, alone and unwanted there, while some of them were talking about how living in that refugee centre in Konitsa was perhaps even worse than being in prison. But, there was a boy who had been living in this reception centre for unaccompanied minor refugees for two years now, who spoke Greek fluently and who is being educated in Konitsa's local high school. The fact that he knew the language, as well as that he was having contacts on a daily basis with people outside the centre due to his student status, allowed him to have more intensive contacts with members of the local community. Since he felt incorporated in Konitsa's everyday life, and had friends outside of the centre, Konitsa and this particular Institution were for him his "new home" or "second home". Furthermore, his perception of life in Konitsa was much better than the one that most of the other boys had formed.

His example is relevant because it shows the importance of language and education for his perception of himself as a member of a community and in perceiving Konitsa as a second home, or, at least, not as a prison. Moreover, the construction of place out of space lies in someone's putting a part of his identity into that particular space. By doing that, a person is making it meaningful, making it his/her own. Therefore, the decision that most of the boys have taken –not to learn Greek on purpose– could indicate a deliberate attempt on their behalf to not attach themselves to that place.

But, why was that the case? Why were the boys refusing to learn Greek, even when they knew that could help them to better communicate with each other as well as with the Centre authorities? Having put that question to them, some of the boys told us, that due to the very difficult financial situation their Centre was experiencing, funds have been cut and there is no person available to teach them. Nevertheless, one of the boys disagreed with this prevailing assessment. It was the same boy who spoke Greek and went to Konitsa's school. He told us that, despite the financial crisis' consequences, there was always someone there to teach them Greek. The real problem was that they didn't show any interest in learning the language. We found that interesting as we had already noticed that majority of the boys were complaining about feeling isolated, precisely because they were having serious difficulties communicating with 'Others'. Our suggestion is, that the reason behind their refusal to learn Greek is their deeply ingrained belief that staying in Konitsa is but a temporary phase in their lives.

None of the boys would want to stay in Konitsa, or, for that matter, in Greece – the case was just the opposite one; they were all having plans to get their passports and official documents and leave Greece in order to move on towards Western and Northern Europe. They perceived Konitsa merely as a temporary station on their journey to arriving somewhere else, while that somewhere often means anywhere but the place they actually were living. That is exactly why they practically did not see any point at all in putting so much of an effort into learning the language. If they were planning to go somewhere else, they would not need to learn it.

Since their plans for the future are all situated in other places, deciding to learn Greek could even make them feel like they were betraying themselves and their plans of leaving that temporary site of their journey. Learning Greek could be a symbol of accepting the fact that they might be stuck in Konitsa for much longer than they had initially imagined.

But, despite thinking it is just for a short period of time, a lot of boys actually stay in the Institution for several years, and even though they may not know the language, or are not offered organized activities to fill their time, they still do try to leave their personal trace in Konitsa's space. They are in fact constructing a place. With this in mind, we could argue that space in Konitsa appears either as a place (the Institution) or a non-place (town) for the refugees.

Permanent temporality has so far been discussed by many different authors, often in terms of interpreting immigrant workers' plans for the future and returning home after having spent significant number of years abroad (Čapo Žmegač 2005; Klimt 1989). For example, in her article about Croatian economic migrants in Germany, Jasna Čapo Žmegač argues that what most of them have in common is the fact that they are thinking of and planning to come back home, to Croatia. They all started working in Germany on a temporary basis, with the idea this situation would last for only a few years until they could manage to earn and save enough money to live a comfortable life back in Croatia. Those few years often become several decades, a lot of them never return, or at least not permanently. Nevertheless, the thing that remained unchanged was their perception of their stay in Germany as being only temporary (Čapo Žmegač 2005).

In the case of our informants at the Institution, permanent temporality does not relate to the idea of coming back home, but more to the idea of going further, continuing the journey in which Konitsa is always perceived as an early station rather than the final destination point. Based on our fieldwork data, we have defined permanent temporality as a period of time that it is conceived as ephemeral in spite of the fact that it turned out to be longer than was initially expected. Permanent temporality, this permanent "liminal phase" (Turner 1967) of their lives, or the fact that this particular phase is temporary but they do not know how long it will last (and it often proves to be longer than just a few months) plays an important role on the way they perceive Konitsa, the Institution that harbours them, and the relationships among them. The next part of this paper will focus on the latter issue — the relationships that boys build with each other and with representatives of the local authorities.

Construction of an Imaginary Kinship

In the second part of this paper we will discuss the significance of a fictive social network's construction among the boys, as a response to their perception of 'otherness' in the context of an environment governed by the concept of permanent temporality, as this has been elaborated above. We define this social network as a form of 'fictive', 'imaginary' kinship. As the term 'fictive kinship' implies, the kinship relations we are focusing on do not correspond exclusively to the biological approaches to the concept; in other words, our approach is not related to notions such as lineage, descent, blood relations, and, since our research did not involve any kind of consanguinal or affinal association, we thought of it in a metaphorical way. 'Imaginary kinship' (as we encountered it in our research) reflects the social bonds within a 'heterogenic' group of people, based on their common present situation and common predicament. By heterogenic group of people we are referring to people with different cultural backgrounds (religion, origin, language), different biographies etc.¹

¹ In another version ("new kinship imaginary"), the term is used to describe an educational environment among children facing disability problems (special forms of education). For further details, see Rapp & Ginsburg (2011), especially p. 384, where the authors present a summary of the relevant bibliography.

At this point, it is important to clarify the key concepts that have emerged during our research and on which we have based our assumptions. As we were interviewing our informants, we have come across with the concept of “otherness” as a factor of decisive importance for the formation of the boys’ self-perception. We have come to realise that they perceived themselves in a very particular way, which derived from their own idea of how local people would potentially view them; they felt isolated, and regarded themselves as ‘outsiders’, ‘others’ or ‘aliens’. Nevertheless, the fact that they were indeed being perceived as such was always based on personal assumptions. Thus, they did behave as being ‘alien body’, embracing the identity that, in reality, has been self-imposed to them. What is of vital importance in this observation is the fact that they did not just internalise the image of themselves that is created by others as stereotyped judgments for refugees (by ‘others’ we are referring here to Konitsa’s local population). Instead, they incorporated the image they think that has been formed around their personas (Mead 1934). As such, they acted upon an ‘artificial’ *habitus*, thus making clear to us the meaning and role of place and its surroundings for the formation of their self-image (Bourdieu 2002; 2004).

This conclusion is really essential to our core focus on ‘fictive kinship’, since it creates the ground for examining the case in question from a more social and “solidaristic” point of view. What we mean by a solidaristic point of view is the fact that the process the boys were following to construct their social relations has been based on their common predicament and their feelings of exclusion or discrimination by the local community. Instead of being marginalized, the boys created mutual bonds that were based on their similar status, identifying and “incorporating themselves into their own distinct social group” (Chavez, 1991; Van Gennep, 1960, cited by Kim 2009: 510). As such, kinship is constructed in order to establish a basis of relatedness, a common ground on which the kin members can rely on and maybe find comfort that leads them to surpassing possible obstacles of their previous alienated status. “Imaginary kinship” provides the members of the group with a sense of belonging, of sharing, of supporting each other.

In order to elaborate on this assumption, we should reflect upon the quotes of some of our informants, who repeatedly emphasized that “we are a team, and, as a team, we are stronger” or to the fact that they were referring to each other as “brothers” (“we are brothers, a family”). At this point, we should also make clear that religion was a crucial marker of difference, a core issue between the boys (some of them were Muslim whereas others were Christians). Also, their countries of origin were different (and in a potential conflictual relationship with each other). But they choose to cross these boundaries (that hypothetically could result in conflict or division and, eventually, disunity) consciously and on purpose and to focus on the elements that could unite them as a group, as a team. They were aware of the fact that what they had in common was their present situation they had been stucked into. One boy has put it in a very characteristic manner: “With us it doesn’t matter if you’re Muslim or Christian, we have no problems, we respect each other”. “We” has become a reality for them, they do feel as a family and this feeling of belonging makes them viewing each other as being the same, as equal to one another. Constructing a social network of “fictive kinship” is also a way for them to gradually accept the situation they are into and somehow “facilitate their settlement” (Ebaugh and Curry 2000, 206). (By using the term *settlement*, however, we do not imply a permanent condition).

In other words, then, the construction of imaginary kinship on their own behalf has been a response to their shared marginality and personal history, and a mean for providing a safety net for the boys. Sharing a similar refugee profile and being ‘trapped’ in a place they didn’t feel very comfortable with (despite all their efforts to personalise their space) had created the need for certain (emotional) support. The sense of belonging to a certain social group, to *a family*, functions as a defence mechanism against marginality. Therefore, they were trying to socialise among each other by spending time together (they would always eating together) and also by making jokes to one another in an attempt to soften their situation, endure it and feel at ease with their present status (Kim 2009); all these points have been functioned as very crucial steps in the process of bond formation, and they portray a key role in the configuration of their imaginary family.

Going a little bit further and expanding Kropotkin's concept of *mutual aid*, we have come to realise that the boys had established a relationship among them that was based on mutual help. Since their financial status was not very promising, they were trying to support each other by adopting a communal way; whenever someone was in real need of buying something, they provided him with the necessary amount of money in order to purchase the specific object. Everybody tried to contribute as much as they can, caring for each other and creating a relationship of "mutual interdependence" (Kim 2009, 498).

Moreover, we noticed that some of the boys offered to do various things for a particular boy. Nevertheless, these actions should not be misinterpreted as forms of exploitation; rather, they were gestures of potential respect, being completely voluntary. We came to realize then that this boy was enjoying some sort of special treatment by his "brothers" something which could be attributed to the fact that he was receiving Greek education; i.e., he was able to communicate with the local people, a fact which further allowed him not only to interact with them but also become part of the local community as a fully accepted member. It is interesting to note here that his future aspirations included him possibly studying in Greece and even seriously considering staying in the country permanently (although he was also considering going abroad). In other words, he had escaped, in a sense, from his refusal of the temporary situation he was experiencing, by accepting the possibility of permanent settlement. His different way of envisaging the whole situation was probably what made him appearing more independent and strong in the eyes of the other boys.

During our research we've encountered a very interesting perspective/aspect of "fictive kinship". Based on interviews we conducted with boys and our personal observations, we came to realise that their community was a very well structured one, based on a sense of kinship, an 'imaginary kinship'. They have managed to create a new family through which they were articulating various functions significant for their new situation. This *contingent kinship* is a constructed notion, used in particular context "for a particular purpose within a specific temporality" (Jacob 2009, 117). Indeed, this particular social network corresponds to the settings in which it is constructed; in other words, this 'imaginary' kinship relation is perceived as a temporary construction in an expectedly temporary situation. The denial of this 'permanently temporary' situation and the weakness in 'escaping' it constrain the members in a permanent dependence on the specific place for the continuity of their 'imaginary kinship'.

Conclusion

In this paper we've discussed the ways permanent temporality, understood as a period of time conceived as ephemeral but being longer than expected, influences the perceptions of a particular space as well as the relationships between people established in that location. Permanent temporality came out as one of the most important terms and concepts that turned out to be in the epicentre of the discussion about place as well as about imaginary kinship. This concept acts as a connecting link that unites both parts of this paper.

To conclude, our informants' perceived hospitality in Konitsa as a temporary phase. As such, we argue that Konitsa could be seen both as a place and a non-place. Even though they were repeatedly attempting to make Konitsa and the Institution more of a home, most of our informants still felt isolated and marginalized. Feelings of isolation and invisibility in respect with Konitsa's general population made them feeling strongly connected to each other. In other words, then, the construction of 'imaginary kinship' acted as a response to the boys' shared marginality and personal history (which derived from their perception of 'otherness' as a determinant factor of their self-image), providing a safety net for them. This 'second family', constructed on a temporary basis, helped them to accept their present status and thus functioned as a substitute support for that which they would have expected to receive from their families back home.

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STAINED HANDS: THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE MULBERRY TREE IN BOBOSHTIÇE, ALBANIA

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Abstract

Laura Rival (Rival 1996, 1998) has argued that trees are visible and powerful sources of social processes and collective identity (Rival 1996) and can also be symbols of transgenerational unity (Rival 1998). Interrogating these arguments as well as Julian Steward's concept of a "cultural core" (Steward 1955), our research centers around the question of whether and to what degree mulberry trees in Boboshtiçe, Albania, possess their own social and cultural life. Employing a primarily qualitative methodology in studying the village of Boboshtiçe, Albania, this analysis exposes how a unique mulberry tree has embedded itself within the daily life of inhabitants affecting a synergistic effect upon the tree itself. Fieldwork involving interviews, observation, and participation yielded insight into the identity, economic, cultural, symbolic, and medical use values villagers derive from the tree. This research underscores the enduring relevance that nature has to social life and the cultural and social life that nature itself may possess.

Keywords: ethnobotany, cultural ecology, appropriation of nature



Fig. 1. Boboshtiçe, Albania.

Mulberry tree and fruit, 30.07.2014

Photo: Joscelyn Jurich

Introduction

Laura Rival's *The Social Life of Trees* (1998) argued that across a variety of contexts, trees may exert a palpable force in the structure of communities. This opened the dialogue that had heretofore focused on dynamic, natural forces that can exact sudden changes in society, such as volcanic eruptions or hurricanes, to the relatively static, but important, natural phenomena propagated by the constant background that trees provide in a place. As Tim Ingold has observed, the human world is populated by non-human entities that can't be rigidly separated into natural and social. These non-human entities form context for humans as much as humans form

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context for them (Ingold 2005). Boboshticë, Albania, provided an optimal setting to explore whether and to what degree trees may possess their own social and cultural life.

Field site, research design, and methodology

We collected empirical data between 29 July and 1 August 2014 as part of the fieldwork component for the Ninth International Konitsa Summer School. The village of Boboshticë, Albania, served as our field site. Boboshticë (in Albanian - Boboshticë or Boboshtica, in Roumanian - Boboștița, in Greek - Μπομποστίτσα, Бобостица) is one of the nine villages of Drenovë Commune and is located approximately three kilometers from the city of Korça. Our research visit coincided with the annual harvest period of the berries from the mulberry trees. Over the course of our study, we interviewed 21 informants who were local and regional residents. This comprised 13 men and eight women who ranged in age from 17 to 93 years old. Our interviews evolved from an unstructured to semi-structured format. We consulted literature relevant to cultural ecology and embodied experience by scholars such as Laura Rival, Tim Ingold, and Michael Lambek.

Boboshticë and its mulberry tree

Nestled in the hilly terrain of eastern Albanian lies Boboshticë, known regionally for its churches, good restaurants, and its venerated *rakimani*, derived from the mulberry tree. The village is also notably the birthplace of poet and playwright Viktor Eftimi (1889-1972). Upon entering the village our research team immediately noticed the trees, the *Morus spp.*, in the property that surrounded the road. Gnarled, shady, and low-lying, the trees bore plump berries and had spatters of purple on the ground under their foliage.

Boboshticë's *Morus spp.* is extremely unique to Albania, with the neighboring village of Drenovë, possibly the village of Treska being the only other locations of this particular tree. While other types of mulberry trees populate Albania, this *Morus* is typified by its uncommon berry. Anecdotal estimates quantify the tree population in Boboshticë at 600 and in Drenovë at 400. Mystery shrouds the origin of the tree. Based on our interviews, the villagers most frequently cited Bulgaria, or a variant such as Bulgaria-China, as the genesis of the tree. Responses regarding the arrival of the tree ranged from 30 to more than 1000 years.

Botanist Kalliopi Stara examined our photos of the trees and she attributed the shape to a type of pruning, whose former use was not evident based on the interviews, but which could have been due to silk production which has been documented in the Balkans. Historically, as a country noted for silk production from mulberry trees city of Shkodra was site of a silk production plant until it closed in 1990 due to the political changes and the mulberry trees were cut down. (Xhoxhi 2006, 353). There are at least 12 varieties of mulberry trees found in home gardens and formerly used in this industry (Xhoxhi 2006, 353), but we were not able to establish whether Boboshticë's mulberry was the same or that a silk industry existed there at one time.



Fig. 2. Boboshticë, Albania. Mulberry trees, 30.07.2014 Photo: Madeline Hendricks

Boboshtiçe's Population

Anecdotally, Boboshtiçe maintains a permanent population totaling between 200 and 250. The official population numbers at 1466, but this appears to include its residents who maintain residences there, working abroad and returning for holidays. The village make-up thus encompasses a partly mobile and transnational population. Boboshtiçe appeared to be a relatively affluent village with a reputation for producing teachers. Many informants held or had retired from professional careers such as teaching and engineering. Orthodox Christianity appeared to be the primary religion in the community, although priests do not hold services frequently.

Most residents self-identified as Albanian before relating other ethnically identifying characteristics, such as Bulgarian, Macedonian, or Vlach. It appeared that all residents could speak Albanian and that a significant percentage also spoke Greek, either because of their ethnic heritage or experience abroad. Our interviews were held in Greek, English, Russian, and French. Additionally, one informant spoke Kajnas, a Slavic dialect, and with whom we were able to interview using a combination of Russian and Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian to communicate as effectively as possible without a professional translator. While some informants alluded to Boboshtiçe having originally been populated with Bulgarians, which would dovetail with the speculated origin of the *Morus spp.*, we have not yet had the opportunity to verify this as historically accurate.



Fig. 3. Boboshtiçe, Albania. One of the oldest residents of Boboshtiçe, Elpi Mancho, photographed near her rakimani distillation area. Mancho speaks the Kajnas dialect, 01.08.2014 Photo: Madeline Hendricks

Theoretical framework

Julian Steward's concept of a "cultural core" is one of several theoretical approaches useful in examining how Boboshtiçe's mulberry trees assume their own cultural and social life. Steward argued for a holistic perspective of culture, in which all of its aspects are interdependent to varying degrees. Those most closely linked to subsistence activities and economic arrangements form its "cultural core." In Boboshtiçe, the mulberry tree and its primary use in making *rakimani* could be interpreted as forming the village's cultural core as defined by Steward, but also as expanding his definition. In Boboshtiçe the mulberry tree's significance extends beyond subsistence and economic factors.

Rakimani – the primary product from the mulberry tree

Our first interview took place in the village of Zape approximately one kilometer outside Boboshtiçe. With a jar of fresh mulberries sitting on a wall for consumption, villagers praised Boboshtiçe's rakia for preventing illness and not leaving hangovers. This reverential sentiment was echoed in many subsequent interviews. The majority of informants with whom we spoke described Boboshtiçe's *rakimani* (mulberry brandy) as an

extremely unique product. While other types of rakia across the Balkans are made from plums, grapes, and other fruits, *rakimani* is made from the distinctive Boboshtiçe mulberries. Its distinctive light lime green color derives from the inclusion of a mulberry tree leaf in the distillation process. Apart from *rakimani*, the only other product villagers make from the trees is another alcohol they called *liqueur*, which was sweet, viscous, and of a dark purple color. One informant stated that the trees' leaves could be used to remove stains from hands. Informants stated that cutting the tree is difficult due to the high water content in the wood, rendering woodcraft impossible.



*Fig. 4. Drenove, Albania. Home distillery, 30.07.2014
Photo: Joscelyn Jurich*



*Fig. 5. Drenove, Albania. Rakimani production, 31.07.2014
Photo: Anastasia Kryachk*



*Fig. 7. Drenove, Albania. Liqueur made of rakimani, 30.07.2014
Photo: Anastasia Kryachko*



Fig. 6. Boboshtiçe, Albania. Rakimani in the restaurant 'Vila Melko', 29.07.2014. Photo: Anastasia Kryachko

Ownership and political economy

The mulberry trees were located haphazardly through the village, some behind fences, others out in the open in what appeared to be public space. None of them bore distinct ownership markers of any kind. Ultimately we learned that all of the trees in the village are privately owned and that communal, "public" trees do not exist. We were not able to establish a precise framework of ownership of the trees until the socialist regime, which

lasted from 1944 until 1992. During that period, the government tended the trees and distilled *rakimani* through collectives, but apparently allowed villagers use of the trees to make *rakimani*, though a minority of opinions in the village varied on this point. One informant stated that individual *rakimani* production was prohibited under the Hoxha regime and that all rakia was produced by state collectives of 20 members, and the *rakimani* was exported outside of Albania. For this informant, it seems that individual *rakimani* production post-Hoxha was part of a larger economic and political emancipation.

Once the Republic of Albania was established, the trees were distributed to all families within the village. Although the *Komuna* Drenovë, which administers Boboshticë, maintains a tree registry, most informants stated that families do not inscribe their trees and that everyone simply knows which trees belong to whom. Attempts to follow up with the *komuna* to inquire further about the registry failed. However we learned that ownership may transfer through sale. Every family in the village has one or two trees and can obtain a paper to register the tree, though many told us that they do not go through this registration process. When we asked who cared for the trees during an absence, we were informed that neighbors or relatives attend the trees and provide some *rakimani* from the tree to the owners upon return.



Fig. 8. Boboshticë, Albania. According to the informants, every village family owns trees. Everyone knows whose trees are whose, but at first glance it is hard to demarcate ownership, 30.07.2014 Photo: Anastasia Kryachko

Many Balkan countries regard rakia as their national drink and Albania is no exception. Home distillation, following conventional processes, seemed to be the norm. We did not discover any public distilleries in Boboshticë – simply, all were located in peoples' homes. When asked about the sale, informants initially stated that they made *rakimani* for personal use or to give to friends, but some also confided that they would occasionally sell their surplus to others. We learned that *rakimani* sells for 1000 lek (approximately 7 euro) per liter, whereas one liter of other sorts of rakia runs 700 lek. One informant estimated that one tree yields 20 to 25 liters of rakia per year.

Given that many people outside Boboshticë know of and consume *rakimani* and that its presence and popularity are regularly noted in tourism guides and travel books, it likely forms a small, informal economy. An elderly demographic characterizes Boboshticë's full-time resident population and it might be deduced that the sale of *rakimani* supplements retirement income. At some level *rakimani* must exist in the formal economy – we learned from a conversation with American tourists of Macedonian descent that they had imported *rakimani* from Taverna Antoneta to the United States through a New Jersey distributor.

Cultural core and Community identity

In speaking with the informants, we learned that villagers and non-villagers alike explained that Boboshticë is special because it is (almost) the only place that makes *rakimani*. As one of our informants, Tomi (28 years old), told us: “Not people make raki, but the place.” For him and other informants, the village is inextricably tied to *rakimani*, so much so that he described it as the cause for *rakimani* production.

The informants we interviewed generally spoke about the *rakimani* with great pride and one claimed that the spirit is even consumed by dignitaries during presidential inaugurations. The younger informants revealed the extent to which the production of *rakimani* and the mulberry trees remain relevant in contemporary society identity. Vassil, a 21-year-old from Boboshtiçe but now working abroad in Switzerland, told the authors that he associates the tree with his family due to the tradition of picking the berries every summer. Vassil's younger sister, Zoiça, 17, expressed mild distaste for the berry collection, telling us she found it monotonous. One young woman, whose maternal relatives originate from Boboshtiçe and who seasonally resides there, keeps a bottle of it with her at her home in Thessaloniki where she studies.

While villagers who collect the mulberries are all visibly recognizable as participating in the work by their stained hands, it is not clear that a social community exists among the individuals collecting. The degree to which mulberry collecting is a type of socially cohesive labor for some residents remains unclear from our research thus far.

The following observation could be instructive on the integration of the tree into the collective identity:

During one interview one villager chided another for wearing gloves during the collection. While the gloved villager explained that she worked as a cashier and needed to have clean hands, the other did not appear to find this acceptable.

This perceived rejection of a community characteristic illustrates, at least in one case, the extent to which the mulberry collection is etched into a villager's psyche and the pressure members can exert on one another to conform to a community norm.



Fig. 9. Boboshtiçe, Albania. Collecting mulberries early in the morning, 01.08.2014 Photo: Madeline Hendricks



Fig. 10. Boboshtiçe, Albania. Stained hands of mulberry collector, 01.08.2014 Photo: Madeline Hendricks

Pot

ential Social Cohesion

During the harvest period we observed villagers gathering mulberries throughout the day, which informants confirmed took place at two- to three times during daylight. Such frequent collection necessarily prompts villagers to minimally acknowledge one another, possibly contributing to a sense of community. One tree owner allowed the authors to collect his berries, unbeknownst to other villagers. When this occurred, two villagers fended for the trees by attempting to chase the authors away. Such actions imply a sense of mutual responsibility regarding the trees.



Fig. 11. Boboshtiçe, Albania. Family tradition of preparing punch, 01.08.2014 Photo: Madeline Hendricks

Some informants told us that *rakimani* was for male consumption and that the sweeter derivative, liqueur, was reserved for females. In relation to the rest of the supply chain that encompasses production, this alleged, end-consumer bias was the only part of it that bore any relation to labor division by gender. We observed both men and women gathering berries and both sexes seemed equally adept at processing the berries into *rakimani*. In this context, the manufacture of *rakimani* may represent an egalitarian force within the community.

Informants who were from the village advised that they learned about the trees and the *rakimani* distillation from family members, while those who had moved there learned of the process from community members. The aspect of learning in the former case suggests a

transgenerational transfer of knowledge, while the former could imply an initiation of newcomers to the village's society. That all local informants were aware of the trees, their use, property rights, and distillation practices supports the idea that local ecological knowledge about the tree is learned social knowledge and not pedagogic.

Symbolic Meaning

Informants offered the research team *rakimani* during every interview that took place at an informant's home or place of work. The offering of *rakimani*, rather than something more common, such as water or coffee, underscores the emblematic nature that this drink connotes. The offering may also reveal something about the research team's positionality and how village residents interpreted our presence there. Our international team included one Greek, one Russian, and two Americans and Boboshtiçe residents consistently referred to us as "tourists." This indicates that we were perceived not necessarily only as researchers but as motivated by a touristic interest in the region. The villagers' offering of *rakimani* was thus also a way of welcoming foreigners with a touristic interest in the village into the village.



Fig. 12. Boboshtiçe, Albania. Use of *rakimani* as a way to greet strangers and welcome them to a home, 31.07.2014 Photo: Madeline Hendricks

We also learned that Boboshtiçe's mulberry trees have no place in the local school's curriculum, yet according to a former teacher, children depicted them in drawings. This illustrates the place in a child's imagination that the tree occupies. An enormous painting of the Boboshtiçe countryside with the *Morus spp.* prominently displayed greets diners at the entrance of the well known Boboshtiçe restaurant, Vila Melko. Quite telling, following an interview, informant Antonina Çaprazi gifted the research team with a mulberry seedling and handed it to Thalia, the daughter of our team member Dimitra. These gestures reflect the symbolic character the *Morus spp.* imparts to some members of the community.

Practical uses

When we inquired about consumption practices, non-villager informants stated that *rakimani* is consumed on special occasions such as weddings. Additionally, one of the churches distills its own *rakimani* that it distributes during public festivals. Boboshticë residents advised that some people drink *rakimani* daily, and it can be drunk in the morning with coffee.

Over the course of interviews, informants would sometimes distance themselves from the daily practice only to disclose at a further point that they sometimes would drink daily, particularly during the winter, because they considered it prophylactic against illness. The villagers painted a picture of *rakimani* as a panacea, even a “miracle” solution, for many ailments - an inhalant to clear sinuses, a rub for sore muscles, a disinfectant for wounds, a concoction for sore throats or the flu. Residents also described making marmalade from the mulberries. The multitude of uses clearly shows the great extent to which informants have physically incorporated the *rakimani* into their daily lives.



Fig. 13. Albania, Boboshtica. The gift of a mulberry seedling to the research team from informant Antonina Çaprazi., 31.07.2014 Photo: Anastasia Kryachko

Superstitions and folklore

We were surprised to learn that no informants were able to relate fairytales, legends, drinking rituals, songs, rhymes, or stories about the tree with any consistency. We did not encounter any beliefs about trees’ possessing good and evils spirits or belief that the mulberry tree is considered sacred in the community. Villagers stated that the *rakimani* imparted no religious value. According to ethnobotanist Andrea Peroni (2014), “It does not exist as such an ALBANIAN folklore and cultural history of *Morus*, but many in different places.” Nevertheless, some interviews yielded individual data points on this subject. One informant advised that a prohibition existed against cutting the trees while another averred that people could not fall out of them.

Yet another described a rule forbidding the abandonment of a tree. Ilio Kuneshta, 93, the village’s oldest resident, told us the following story:

There was a once Romanian family in the village whose son left Boboshticë to return to Romania. A malediction was put on him at the church for leaving the village. After ten years away, he returned to Boboshticë and looked for a villager to excuse him. He had money then and the man constructed the main bridge in the village as an apology and sort of penance for leaving the village.

The story ended with Ilio explaining that one cannot cut any of the mulberry trees or any part of one. Ilio told this story to us in French, and it is significant that he used the French word for “roots” (*racines*) to refer to the mulberry trees instead of the word for “trees” (*arbres*). His story of the young man who left the village, was punished with a malediction for doing so and then returned relates directly to the concept of “roots” and “rootedness” in place. One who decides to “uproot” him/herself is punished in the story he told.

Findings

The team found that Boboshtiçe villagers indeed related to the mulberry trees in several different aspects and on many levels that characterize a community's social and cultural life and, transitively, that of the *Morus spp.* The short period with which we were able to conduct our research and other tight parameters signify the need for further research, but even at this premature stage, it appears on many that the inference that trees possess their own social and cultural is not unwarranted.

Conclusion

This analysis of the social and cultural aspects of the mulberry tree and collection of visual material in Boboshtiçe has allowed us to contribute to theoretical and methodological approaches in the socio-cultural anthropological research of trees and yields the following findings: The cultivation of berries from Boboshtiçe's *Morus spp.* in Albania serves as a mediator for some of the village's social constructions and reflects the singularity of the village despite its multicultural, multinational and multilingual makeup. The economic benefits from *rakimani* production in Boboshtiçe influence the construction of the relationship between trees and people. The visual depictions of the mulberry trees in Boboshtiçe add to their social and cultural role, as does the villagers' belief in *rakimani*'s curative qualities. Yet even if the 'stained hands' of some community members visually represents the presence of the mulberry in everyday life, it nevertheless cannot be taken for granted that it influences and forms this community. It is the mutual responsibility assumed by the local population for the trees and berries that illustrates a sense of community and social cohesion. The existence of so many meanings and uses generated by the *Morus spp.* in Boboshtiçe create an interesting context in which to examine and expand Steward's cultural core framework. Thus, due to its integral role in the community structure, our research shows that the *Morus spp.* indeed possesses a social, economic, and cultural life within the village.



Fig. 14. Boboshtiçe, Albania. The researchers with the oldest informant in Boboshtiçe, Ilio Kuneshta, 31.07.2014 Photo: Anastasia Kryachko

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LANDSCAPE IN TRANSITION: ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATION AND USE IN GJONOMADH VILLAGE, ALBANIA¹

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1. Introduction

Historical changes, political systems, social organization and culture exert an immense influence on the relationship between the local societies and their environment. When a radical break occurs in a country that is related to its socio-economic and political structures, this relationship between locals and their environment becomes more ambivalent. Having been isolated from the rest of the Continent, Albania witnessed a communist regime for approximately 50 years, under Enver Hoxha's rule. Totalitarian ideology, as the capillary form of power, has been able to penetrate into both the political-economic sphere and the everyday life of the Albanians as well as their mind-sets. The regime's demise and the transition to democracy that started in 1991 brought forth several changes and posed challenges in the way people encounter the world regarding its social, political and economic conditions. Consequently, communism's collapse and the path towards a parliamentary system represents a turning point in Albania's history; therefore, it deserves our attention in order to understand how these transformations in the political superstructure have been translated into all the aspects of peoples' daily lives.

This paper examines the historicity of the landscape, by mostly concentrating on the ethnographic case study of Gjonmadh Village in Albania. It chiefly investigates the transformation which the landscape has undergone as a consequence of historical and political conditions that had affected the local communities' relationship with their environment, in the sense of their use and management of land and its natural resources. Consequently, it also underlines the symbolic aspects of the land use in the village.

2. Society and Environment: Is it Enough?

The philosophical approach to nature as an objective reality that exists independently from its perception has a long philosophical standing in Western thought. However, recent developments in social theory regarding environmental issues have championed the idea that nature is more than a 'thing'; it is socially constructed by the people who are subjected to it as well as by the concomitant political and economic structures (Evernden 1992; Eder 1994; Hannigan 2006). Broadly speaking, the social constructivist approach to the environment envisages the latter as something that cannot be restricted into its mere physicality:

¹ This project was materialized under the supervision of Vassilis Nitsiakos, professor of Social Folklore, University of Ioannina (Department of History and Archaeology), and Director of the International Konitsa Summer School in Anthropology, Ethnography and Comparative Folklore of the Balkans.

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'To accept the view that nature is not an objective reality does not mean that it does not exist. It does exist and it has a materiality. The way we perceive, understand, define it is socially constructed, that is why it differs from one historical period to the other, from place to place, from culture to culture, even from one social class to another, from one social category to the other and many times from one person to the other according to social status, age, profession, way of life (urban/rural etc), invested interests and so on.' (Nitsiakos 2003, 66)

If one aims to adopt the social constructivist paradigm while dealing with the issues related with the environment, there occurs a need for a socially and historically sound approach, since the environment emerges out of socio-historical processes. (Stravarakakis 2000, 103). At this point, ecological anthropology emerges as a sub-branch in the discipline's wider context that scrutinizes the multi-dimensional relationship between, on the one hand, the cultural dynamics of human populations, their social organizations and, on the other, their environment by adopting a variety of research methods such as comparative research, synchronic perspective and diachronic analysis (Orlove 1980, 235). Although social organization and culture are two significant phenomena within the scope of environmental issues, Kottak has pointed out that local ecologies of communities cannot be studied without reference to the socio-political developments; that is because these ecologies are challenged and transformed by wider processes in the fields of economy and politics (1999, 26). Thus, what is needed in the anthropological studies of the 'environment' is a holistic approach that takes into consideration both people's local social organization and culture as well as political and economic developments. At this point, social constructivism provides the theoretical framework for achieving the kind of research agenda that has been constructed by ecological anthropology.

It follows from the above that nature is perceived as socially constructed; consequently, humans' relation to it is also socially, politically and economically contextualized. As a result of this, "[p]olitics is inevitably ecological and ecology is inherently political" (Robbins 2011, 3), and the role of political-economic power is important in recognizing economy's contribution to the construction of people's relationship to their environments through which cultural landscapes are coming into existence. Cultural landscapes emerge as a result of nature's transformation by culture (Ingold 1993; Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995). This means that the landscape is understood as a process instead of simply being a mere physicality (Nitsiakos 2003, 15). Accordingly, landscapes are conceived here as being various expressions of power that have material consequences and impact on people's lives — for example, "where and why they manage individual and collective livelihoods, and are therefore subject to contestation and competing representations" (Neumann 2011, 848). Through implying a cultural dimension, cultural landscape is lived in [the body] and through it, is mediated and worked on and altered, and is replete with cultural meaning and symbolism (Tilley 1994, 26). Therefore, the use of ecological anthropology's analytical framework provides the necessary tools for reading landscape as a site for the expression of culture and authority, as well as a ground where the interaction between humans and the environment exists in its own historicity.

3. Setting and the Method

Gjonomadh, located 205 km away from the capital city of Tirana, is situated in Korçë County in the south-eastern Albania. It is approximately 11 km to the centre of Korçë and 7 km to the tourist destination of Voskopoje. The village's population is currently around 200 people. The altitude of the village is approximately 1.000 m above sea level; it is roughly located in a narrow strip of land, between two mountains named as "Gradisht" and "Shesi i Gurrit", and within a tree-agglomeration (fig. 1).

The name Gjonomadh is said to originate from a shepherd named Gjona i Madh, meaning Gjona the Great, who owned a large herd and settled in the area when he found there a water source. Having tempted by

the water, he decided to build his house and settle in the area. After him many people followed and settled there, forming today's Gjonomadh Village.



Fig. 1. The village is located between the mountains of Gradisht (on the left) and Sheshi i Gurrit (on the right). Photograph by the authors, 2014.

In the village there are around 45 households. Sheep and/or goat breeding are the primary source of livelihood and income for the population. Agricultural fields are within the official boundaries of the village, which continue to the backside of Sheshi i Gurrit. Major crops cultivated on these agricultural fields are corn, wheat, common vetch, potato, tomato and the like. The irrigation of the fields is provided through the pipes that are connected to water reserve located in the backside of the mountain Sheshi i Gurrit (fig. 2). The heating for the houses is provided either by woods or gas; the electricity is not used due to economical constraints.



Fig. 2. Water reserve of the village. Photograph by the authors, 2014.

There is one school and a mosque in the village. Its houses are falling into two categories: the old houses and the new ones. While the former consist of handmade houses that have been constructed with stones, mud-bricks and metal plates, the latter are relatively modernized and good-looking, and were made of tile and design stones (figs. 3 and 4).



Fig. 3. An example of an old type of house in Gjonomadh. Photograph by the authors, 2014.



Fig. 4. An example of a new type of house in Gjonomadh. Photograph by the authors, 2014.

Since in this research we have targeted to analysing the relationship between the so called “inhabited” and “wild”, it required from us to develop a “reciprocity of viewpoints” in order to experience this relationship, and hereby to better address it (Jackson 1983, 338). Accordingly, we got involved into an “embodied experience” in order to enlarge an empathetic understanding of the other and to develop a reciprocity of viewpoints which are “experienced bodily before being apprehended in the mind” through the adoption of the other’s position (Jackson 1983, 338). To develop this study as stated, we have come to the conclusion that the most appropriate tool available for achieving this research’s aim is the ethnographic research methods.

The ethnographic fieldwork took place primarily in Gjonomadh Village between 29 July 2014 and 1 August 2014. Professor Vassilis Nitsiakos provided us with the means for accessing the setting, while Alsena Kokalari, who speaks Albanian, functioned as the key mediator in the field.



Fig. 5. The authors (three on the left) conducting interviews in a cafe shop of the village. Photograph by the authors, 2014.

In order to draw forth narratives about the locals’ use and management of land and the ways the latter is controlled and/or affected by the political system under different regimes, thirteen unstructured and oral history interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with the locals. The questions were unstructured and open-ended as they were aiming to offer to the participants the contentment of having a conversation and a chance to determine the interviews’ direction, so that we could together be the initiators of information (Fife 2005, 4-5). Conducting interviews in the places chosen by the participants

was also part of this strategy (fig. 5). Again, this strategy helped us to eliminate the researcher/researched hierarchy, at least to the point that this is feasible.

Participant observation has been another method adopted from us in order to provide a descriptive context in setting the scene for future readers, to complement other methods used during the fieldwork, and to achieve an embodied experience. In this way, we could get ourselves immersed in the field and fade in the background of the locals’ daily lives by walking around the landscape in order to get an experience of it and joining into daily conversations and activities of the locals (fig. 6).



Fig. 6. The authors together with some locals while walking around the landscape. Photograph by the authors, 2014.

However, the limited time and resources available to us restricted our participant observation to the limits of “observing participant”, in the sense that our level of observation exceeded that of participation (Ellen 1995, 29). Another set of data grew out of groups that were naturally forming during the fieldwork (fig. 7). We could turn these groups into occasional group discussions by steering the conversations around our topic to fitting them to our research purpose (O’Reilly 2005, 131).



Fig. 7. A naturally occurring group discussion consisted of one of the authors (in the middle) with some locals. Photograph by the authors 2014.

We have also generated visual data during the fieldwork. These include pictures of the village, the surrounding landscape and from the residents' daily activities. In this context, as researchers who were studying a specific case, we consider that these data consist of notable forms of visual material since they are documenting people's relationship to their landscape and various aspects of their culture (Murchison 2010, 47).

4. Historical and Political Conditions in Albania

The agrarian reforms promoted by Enver Hoxha's Labour Party in 1945 had had immense effects on the organization and use of the landscape (Nitsiakos 2006, 172). Initially, the reform aimed to redistribute the land to the peasantry, to the peasants and those who put their labour on it (Nitsiakos 2003, 43; Cungu et al. 1999, 607). The regime's prime target were the big landowners: “[O]ver 70,000 peasant families, landless or having only limited land received 90 per cent of the distributed land, half of the olive trees and all the working animals” (Pata et al. 1994, 86-7). These reforms were followed by collectivisation of the land and agriculture, and establishment of cooperatives all over the country with the aim of abolishing the private ownership (de Waal 2004).

However, things did not work according to the initial plan; gradually, the ownership of entire swaths of lands that had been distributed to the farmers passed to the hands of co-operatives. Consequently, this posed several challenges to them:

'Peasants were allowed only one or two cows, fifteen to twenty sheep, one or two pigs, one horse or donkey and a limited number of poultry. After the final phase of collectivization, peasant families had a right to only 0.1 hectares of land for personal use in the plain zones, and 0.15 hectares in the highlands.' (Pata et al. 1994, 91)

Considering the appropriation of agricultural products by the state at a very low price, its motto in that era was "let us sow even on stones". That, in its turn, led to the abrupt decline in agricultural productivity and, concomitantly, the citizen's living standards (Pata et al. 1994, 94-5). The population's increasing discontent triggered social unrest in various parts of the country, which eventually evolved into a unified political resistance that put an end to the Labour Party's reign and scotched the communist regime in 1991.

The post-communist period in Albania ushered the institutionalization of the free market economy through the attempts of abolishing the ban on private trade, liberalizing the prices that previously were set by the central government, distributing the collective agricultural lands as well as livestock and fruit trees back to the people, and establishing a free exchange rate status between the Albanian currency (LEK) and other foreign currencies (Pata et al. 1994, 95). The motto of this era was "land belongs to those who till it; land partitioning will be proportional to the number of people in a family" (Pata et al. 1996, 96). However, these developments did not solve the social and economic problems in Albania:

'Although agricultural co-operatives were among the first economic units to break down, the redistribution of land to farming families is not yet complete. As of early 1994, privatization had made significant progress only in the area of small retail shops and other commercial services; very few state enterprises in the food industry were privatized. No new jobs had been created in the public sector; indeed, the unemployment growth rate increased from 29 per cent in 1990, to 88.3 per cent in 1992.' (Tarifa 1995, 156)

Albania, as a country that is trying to be fully integrated into the modern capitalist system, still suffers from grave problems such as unemployment and inefficiency in agricultural production, a result of flawed laws, economic policies, deficiencies in communication and transportation services, lack of knowledge of how the markets are functioning and farmers' habits that have been developed during the previous regime (Pata et al. 1994; Barlett 2008).

5. Transformation of Landscape in Gjonmadh

During our fieldwork, we observed that Gjonmadh and its local population have been in many ways under the influence of the ruling political-economic elite. The way the landscape is perceived, the way the locals interact with their environment and the reasons for it, as well as the way they manage the resources and the landscape itself, are all an expression of, and projection onto, the historical political-economic conditions created by the ruling ideology.

5.1 Agricultural Production

The mountains that surround Gjonmadh, being widely exhausted and exploited throughout history, are the major witnesses and signs of how history is written for the village in particular and for the country in general. Related to the self-sufficiency policies of the communist regime, the slopes of the mountains in Gjonmadh were bloodthirstily deforested and terraced for the agricultural output's increase (fig. 8).

Fig. 8. A mountain's present status around Gjonmadh: it was terraced and intensively sowed during the communist period. Photograph by the authors, 2014.



According to a villager's description, this is what happened to this particular mountain:

'This mountain was covered by forest in the past, but kooperativa [communist co-operative] destroyed it... They wanted to grow yellow lentils. They also cultivated some wheat, oat and beans. They were deciding which land to cultivate and we were working on that land. We were renting fields from the state and were cultivating it to subsist ourselves.'

Yellow lentils do not require water while growing; therefore, the particular crop was efficient enough in terms of production for the cooperatives to grow it on the mountains. To provide irrigation for other crops in the agricultural fields, the state constructed the water reserve and enabled the transportation of water to the fields through pipes, a system still being used today in the village — nowadays, the motivation is different, albeit the aim remains the same.

However, many villagers have pointed out that the production during the period of communist regime was inefficient despite the presence of more arable fields and the use of more chemical fertilizers. A young man from the village says:

'Now we have more products even though we have less land to cultivate. During the [communist] regime we had much more land but it was inefficiently cultivated. Now we can get the same amount of the product from a smaller piece of land.'

The rhythm of cultivation could also be discerned from other aspects of the daily life. A woman in the village describes how working conditions during the period of the communist regime were socially restraining in addition to being environmentally depleting:

'We were working all day and we couldn't know if our children were alive or not. We had to leave our children alone at home during the [communist] regime. We were afraid (...) so we were fastening our children to the beds. (...) Children didn't eat anything during the whole day. The woman in charge of the kooperativa [communist co-operative] used to taking us to our home during the day and letting us feed our children and taking us back to work (...).'

In addition to the intensive cultivation, extensive amount of 'chemical' fertilizers have been used by the co-operative to increase the output and extirpate the insects such as grasshoppers; despite that, livestock manure could have been a slow but sustainable alternative in Gjonmadh. The pasturelands were used for cultivation during that time. However, as has been the result in other parts of the country (Nitsiakos 2006), this cultivation rhythm led the soil to lose its productivity. Apart from environmental concerns, it proved to be detrimental in terms of social and family life as well.



Fig. 9. Bunker on the one of the slopes of the mountain Sheshi i Gurrit. Photograph by the authors, 2014.

The use of land in the post-communist period has changed dramatically. Terraces on the slopes are abandoned and greening activities started in the region after 1999. Instead of cultivating monotype crops, the villagers vary the cultivation and plantation across the seasons and years in order for them to reclaim the productivity and efficiency that has been lost during the previous regime. Extensive use of human labour has been replaced by the increasing use of machineries, such as tractors. Apart from aiming at the productivity's increase, antiquated or malfunctioning machineries and water infrastructures to reach the mountains is another reason for abandoning the terraces in the slopes.

However, free market economy permits only to the wealthier inhabitants of the village to rent tractors for agricultural activities. As a man from the village claimed:

'Only two families own big tractors. The rest rent them. But the poor ones are facing with economic problems [financial strain]; they use animals or people. But now there is less labour power compared to the [communist] regime.'

There are two main reasons for the shortage in labour power in Gjonmadh. The first one is that the younger generation perceives economic opportunities as limited and cannot see any future for them in the village. Therefore, they migrate to cities or, mostly, to the neighbouring countries — Greece and Italy. The second reason is that labourers are not preferred because of their inability to compete with the machines in the market, as an old man explained to us:

'Everybody goes to the bazaar on their own and sell their products. But there should be a government policy for this because prices are falling down when there is no regulation. Those who are using human labour always end up in the most disadvantageous position. The government should establish a regulating policy common to all.'

Therefore, labour power is not desirable anymore. In other words, contrary to what was happening during the communist era, the villagers' way of interacting with the land has now been differentiated between the poor and the wealthier. Lands were given back to their original owners and restored to the same size that they had been before communism's advent. However, while the people have being marginalized by the communist regime, now, under the market laws, they are getting marginalized relatively to each other.

5.2 Symbolic Aspects of the Landscape's Use

The landscape, apart from being perceived by the communist regime as a tool for the country to reach economic independence through its cultivation, it had also been extensively used for over-projecting militaristic power. During our fieldwork, we came across to one of the country's bunkers on the slope of Sheshi i Gurrit that was built according to Enver Hoxha's directives as a failsafe for potential attacks against the country (fig. 9). However, it is now used for extracting metal and other useful material and it is rumoured to sheltering meetings in secret of the [young and illegal?] couples in the village.



Fig. 10. 'Kuri' on one of the mountains slope.
Photograph by the authors, 2014.

In the post-communist period, villagers in Gjonmadh also perceive landscape as symbolizing nature's intrinsic value. The forest is called 'kuri' (or 'dushk' and 'haisht'), which means 'protected'. It is around three years old and it is said to have reborn from its ashes by the locals' decision to protect it (fig. 10). During the previous regime, the forest has been used as to satisfy the needs of the wooden ovens for producing bread, and that resulted to deforestation. Another function of it is that it acts as a liminal space, demarcating the community land from the other regions.

After the regime's collapse, the forestlands have been divided and given back to the villagers. As a man said to us:

'We protect it [the forest]. After we've made several attempts for three years in the row, we decided to gather signatures for it to be permanently protected. We use the forest for our needs as it prevents the floods, provides clean air and offers 'ka lezet' (aesthetic pleasure).'

This indicates both what motivates people in their efforts to protecting the forest as well as the ways they are interacting with their environment on the symbolical level in post-communist Gjonmadh.

One of the village's most crucial symbolic elements is the mosque that was built collectively by the villagers in 2006 (fig. 11). Since the religious practices and symbols had been prohibited by the communist regime, the mosque was demolished after the decision taken by the central government. However, religious rituals are again symbolically reflected on the landscape by the construction of a new mosque (which, however, is not being used very much), thus exhibiting the significance of its presence for the villagers in order to construct their identities on the landscape. The political system's change is reflected on the way the locals are symbolically getting attached to their land, and the building of a mosque is a way for expressing this. In our case, landscape is managed culturally in a way for an identity of the village to be constructed.



Fig. 11. The village's Mosque. Photograph by the authors, 2014.



Fig. 12. A stone set by villagers between two fields.
Photograph by the authors, 2014.

After the transition to liberal market economics, the landscape has been evolved into a terrain on which economic possessions, in other words 'wealth', is expressed symbolically by the individuals. This is another example of the likewise way the people are interacting with the surrounding landscape. In Gjonmadh, it is now possible to see that the ways of interacting with the environment are motivated by the desire of symbolizing the wealth within a capitalist system where the emphasis given to the individual differences is appreciated and supported. To illustrate this, it is worth noting that, after the communist regime's collapse, the lands were

distributed back to the original owners and this is reflected on the landscape through the demarcating lines that have been drawn between these agricultural fields to indicate private properties (fig. 12). Here we see again how the dominant ideology of the ruling socioeconomic system is exhibited in every single detail of the locals' daily lives. As we have mentioned before, yet another expression of it has to do with the houses that began to be differentiated under the new ruling system. These examples show us that the landscape's symbolical use and perception varies according to the ruling ideology. In other words, and to a certain degree, the economic basis determines the superstructure.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, and having as our field study the village of Gjonmadh, we've tried to draw attention to matters such as the landscape, the appropriation of land, and its use and management by the local population. We've mostly tried to examine the transformations of the landscape that are subject to the different historical – economic and political– conditions. In other words, through the reading of the landscape as one of history's most important witnesses, in this paper we've strived to present how history and politics were experienced and projected onto the landscape through transforming the ways people use the land and manage its resources under different ideological systems.

Based on the findings we've brought forth, it is now possible to claim that different political systems have different ideologies that penetrate into the daily lives of the people and manipulate their interaction with their environment. In the case of Gjonmadh, while during the communist era incentives have been offered for collective goods (both in the national and local scale) in terms of using and managing the land resources, under the current political situation, motivations on the individual level are more appreciated in many aspects of the locals' relation with their environment. This difference has something to tell us: it is an indicator of how landscape is perceived under different political agendas. This perception could also be discerned from the symbolic aspects of the landscape's use, as it has been shown in the examples of the bunker, houses, mosque and 'kuri'.

Every system has its own rules and ways that offer to the people the possibility, if followed, to sustaining themselves. If you cannot catch up with the pace and the demands of the system, there is the risk of you being marginalized. Under both of those situations, the way locals are engaging with their environment is reflected in that environment, and the result is a culturally constructed landscape. Therefore, the landscape is transformed into a cultural terrain that exhibits the ways you could bargain with the system you're currently living in.

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IS MACEDONIAN IDENTITY CHALLENGED? OBSERVATIONS FROM DOLNO DUPENI BORDER REGION

Mina Hristova

Being in the ‘field’: The symbolic construction of the border space

The border crossing ‘Markova Noga’, the short walking distance between the first road sign for approaching a border crossing and the factual ‘disappearing’ of the Macedonian state territory a few hundred meters down the same road, combine all to give the impression of a closed border crossing, which, nevertheless, is simultaneously ‘inhabited’. The barbed wires and signs announcing that only authorized passing is permitted disrupt the homogenous border reality, which is visible at the border pass itself – a garden with roses in front of the well-maintained building of the border police. A few hundred meters ahead the asphalted road would finish surprisingly, leaving the trespasser in the middle of overgrown and deserted piece of land.

Having to work in the remote area on the south side of Prespa lake in the village of Dolno Dupeni¹, located on the very border between Greece, Macedonia and Albania, we have taken as a starting point of our research the centre-periphery and the top-down understandings of border construction, which suggest that the modern nations and their identities are constructed “from one political centre outwards” and often ‘created’ after the factual placement of borders [Smith 1991, Hutchinson 2001]. Having based on this conceptual context, our intention was to examine the notion of the border itself, its perception by the locals and its reflection on their everyday life.

The notion of the borders, as being ‘produced’ and influencing almost every aspect of the national subjects’ lives, suggests that the borders construct the nation states’ symbolical and physical geography, and are invested with –and permeated by– cultural constructions, “invented traditions” and symbols. In this way, an imagined community is being built – a bond is forged with the community’s motherland, culture, history and common memory (Anderson 1983), by a whole set of administrative, military, economic and cultural relations (Spark 2010). Yet, despite all these, we tend to adopt the perspective set by Eric Hobsbawm: although nations tend to be promoted from above, they nevertheless have to be analysed and understood from below, “in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist” (Hobsbawm 1992: 10).

By studying particular cases of border regions (e.g., see Donnan and Wilson 2005), which have undergone the processes of reterritorialization, different historical circumstances, have been loaded with traumatic meaning for the local population, and therefore subversive to the nation-state and the identity of its people, we can observe the extraordinary hold they still have on the people’s lives. They contextualise their inhabitants within the nation-state, giving them different perspective opposed to the enduring forms of national identity, guiding our interest towards the cross-border relationships and survival strategies, developed by them.

¹ According to the last official census in Macedonia (2002) [<http://www.resen.gov.mk/Default.aspx?LCID=242-07.07.2015>], it is a small village with 235 inhabitants; but, as we have been told by the locals, their number is a smaller one. The vivid social and economic relations were cut dramatically, leaving the village in a relative isolation until the 70s, when the Prespa region was started to be promoted as a tourist destination (Stojanova 2014: 67).

In the case of Dolno Dupeni village, located just 1.5 km from the 'Markova noga' border-crossing, which marks the border between Greece and Macedonia, and on the trilateral border between Macedonia, Albania and Greece in the larger of the two Prespa lakes, we could observe how the factual existence of the border reflects upon the life of the people who live there. Although closed since the 1960s, this border crossing is still maintained by the Macedonian state authorities. The area has become marginalised from any possible trade routes and/or cross border relations with Greece, partly as a result of the ongoing conflict between the two countries regarding the name of the one of these.

Even though the border is currently closed, the presence of the border police, the police station, the flags, the barbed wires and the 'end of the road' signs consist the context within the locals' live are unfolding. The symbolic construction of the space on the very edge of the nation-state, just a few metres from 'Dolno Dupeni beach'², was of great interest for the observer, because it actually functions as a marker of the gap which an international conflict produces and because is located closely to a site that is a major touristic destination. The fluttering Macedonian national flags over these last 500 meters of the national territory, the buoy, once marking the tripoint between Macedonia, Greece and Albania in the lake of Prespa and the insignia of the Macedonian police, seen everywhere, were clearly contesting the existence of a border-crossing that was fully functioning before, but, nevertheless, is not completely obsolete now. The human presence there was automatically infusing the space with meaning, revealing the multidimensional nature of the frontier – as a place of a governmental presence, as a border line, as an end-line of the human mobility, as an open statement of an ongoing conflict.

1. A peripheral identity- two paths of the 'othering':

1.1 *The 'Other' across the border*

Borders are the political membranes through which people, goods, wealth and information must pass in order to be deemed acceptable or unacceptable by the state (Donnan and Wilson 2001:9). They are marking the exclusive realm of the nation state, within which its absolute power is supposed to be distributed; at the same time, they are substantial mark-ups dividing the nation-state from its neighbours, thus creating the common understanding that behind the marked line there are the 'others' that they are politically, socially, culturally, even historically different from the 'us'. As such these frontiers function as "reminders" or "physical records" of "hostility that exists between these states" (Wilson and Donnan 1998: 9).

Often the borders, especially those of the Balkan Peninsula, are of a highly contested nature. The case of Dolno Dupeni borderline is not an exception to the rule, since it has an extremely difficult historical load, left from the period of the Greek Civil War (1945-1949) in particular. All our respondents were having certain knowledge on the period, as well as family stories from the Greek Civil war³. Andrey⁴ told us:

² Dolno Dupeni beach is considered to be one of the best beaches on Prespa Lake, and it is a quite common destination for the Macedonians to spend their vacations.

³ The Greek Civil War took place from 30 March 1946 – 16 October 1949; during this period the Macedonian (under the formation of NOF – National Liberation Front (Macedonia) and the Greek Communists (KKE – Greek Communist Party) fought against the USA and UK backed right wing government in Greece. As a result in 1948 a Provisional Democratic Government was established in Greece, which announced that the children (known as "Decata begalci" in Macedonian or "The refugee children") from the Greek Democratic Army (the communist Armed Forces) controlled areas had to leave the war zone. Ten of thousands (of which approximately 28,000 were children) of ethnic Macedonians were forced to leave the country [More in: Kirjazovski 2009; Avirovic 2010].

⁴ Andrey, (age 62), Interview. 28.08.2014.

“(...) It was back then when the Greeks ‘cleaned up’ more than 300,000 people; small children – 2, 3, 4, 5 year-old (...) were brought back in Yugoslavia. You can go at this house (pointing at his grandparents’ house behind him - MH)...for 20 days-24 children slept there. My grandmother and grandfather were there as well (...) after that they (the children - MH) were interned in Serbia, Russia, Czechoslovakia or Poland. They were all expelled. The Greeks forbid them from coming back to Greece, to light a candle on their ancestor’s graves.”⁵

This border crossing marks also a place of a great emotional value for the people, related to their childhood. The people who currently live in Dolno Dupeni recall the period that immediately followed the Greek Civil War. A second level of remembrance was unfolded with the narratives of the childhood in the late 1950s, when the border was still open. *Andrey* remembered how he used to cross it with his mother almost every week to go to the market or to church “*when the situation was loose*”. The ‘national’ identity back then was not trapped into international hostilities so they could freely enter another country’s territory in order to just pay a visit to other members of their families.

Despite the limitations set by the Greek and Macedonian governments, the social and cultural contacts between the two sides of the border are inevitably transcending the limitations set by politics through the communal consciousness of once shared identity. In other words “because of their liminal and frequently contested nature, borders tend to be characterized by identities which are shifting and multiple, in ways which are framed by the specific state configurations which encompass them and within which people must attribute meaning to their experience of border life” (Wilson and Donnan 1998: 13).

This type of “situational” identity may be unfolded only into specific moments. During our interview Alexander did not want to talk openly about the Macedonian identity; instead of that, he shared memories and made comparisons with the Yugoslav past. Nevertheless, when our informal conversation was kept going after the interview was over, I asked him about the meaning of the ring with a big Vergina star⁶, with which he was playing during our conversation. He replied: “*Ask him...*” – he said, pointing with his head at the direction of our Greek colleague, sitting on the other side of the table.

1.2. The case of the Puppets and the Puppeteers

Here I would suggest a possible picture of Dolno Dupeni, describing the borderline as a place of ‘otherness’ – not only as a demarcation line, mentally mapping the gap between the two nations, but also as a ‘no man’s land’ within the nation-state, being ‘other-ed’ by the Macedonian political centre.

The states and their borders are two parts of an unbreakable integrity – the first has to sustain their political, cultural and economic infrastructure throughout the territory and secure their borders, the latter are fortifying the state from outside intrusion (such as wars, armed attacks, but also smuggling, contraband, etc.). This relationship may become extremely problematic, especially in the cases when the state is only typically present on its border (due to variety of reasons or not being able to maintain its presence) despite its liminal and

⁵ There are several documents released by the Greek state regarding the political refugees of the Greek Civil War. Most important of these is the Ministerial Decree No. 106841, which allows the return of those, who are “Greeks by genus”. This decree has been evaluated in the Council of Europe (Document 11356- 12 July 2007) as discriminatory, as being exclusive towards those who are not contesting a Greek national affiliation (Macedonians) (Council of Europe 2008: 119).

⁶ The Vergina Star (or Sun) is a solar symbol with sixteen, twelve or eight triangular rays, widely associated with the royal Macedonian dynasty in Greece, after being found during an archaeological expedition, engraved on a golden larnax in a tomb around the small town of Vergina (in Northern Greece) in the late 1970s. The royal burial is believed that belongs to King Philip II, Alexander’s the Great father.

It is nowadays seen as Macedonian state’s national symbol, as well as a representation of the Greek-Macedonian conflict over the name, but also over territory and cultural and historical heritage.

therefore endangered position. The rather porous mode of border's existence may create a situation of instability on it, such as the creation of informal economic networks, smuggling, tax evasion, etc. (Wilson, Donnan 1998).

The disrupted cross border economic relationships bring the attention to the fact that the peripheral business is 'caged' only within the frameworks of the internal Macedonian market, with the closest centre situated in Bitola. Nevertheless, our interlocutors perceived the situation as being dominated by Greeks in terms of product offering and selling. In its turn this evokes different strategies for coping with this situation, which are evident in the Dolno Dupeni case.

Our interlocutors were openly contesting the widespread rumour that there is smuggling (e.g. fish poaching at Prespa lake), but also underlined the fact that the local authorities are aware of this, but "*are looking through their fingers*". In addition to that, according to Alexandar a lot of the café and restaurant owners (with whom he is competing) at and around Dolno Dupeni Beach are prone to evasive actions and do not have the appropriate documentation required from the state for their business, since the "*tourist season is just too short and it takes a lot of time for the preparation of the documents, so they pay the local policemen to offer cover to them.*" The locals are opposing the state, led by the feeling shared by them of being disregarded by it. This adds another straw to the present negative perception, under the current governmental regime, which affects the identity picture distributed by the centre, and creates opposing or substitutive images of it.

For the locals the governmental project "Skopje 2014",⁷ which became one of the most controversial topics both around the Balkans and within the Macedonian state during the last years, is "*just madness*" and "*absolute stupidity*". As Andreas has put it, it can be summarized as follows:

"These are bad politics; this is why the Greeks will never accept us! We will not be accepted into the European Union. 'Skopje 2014' is just absurd. When did we have baroque here – never! This is just nonsense! They want to prove that we are descendants of Alexander the Great – but this is irrelevant. We are Slavic people. I don't know if Alexander was Macedonian, but the region of Macedonia never had exact borders. When Churchill and Stalin divided it – that [i.e., the Aegean] part went to Greece, while Pirin Macedonia was given to Bulgaria. That's it! The question is solved. (...) You can't just take it from them – neither from Bulgaria, nor Greece; no one is going to permit that. This means war! Hotheads!"

For Goran these are just politics which are deliberately leading to conflict with the neighbours, because of "*some interest up there* (i.e., the centre of the political power – M. H.)". The striving for national identity and nation-state legitimization is perceived as unnecessary costs (in terms of 'Skopje 2014'), which could be invested in the infrastructure improvements, strategies for stabilisation of the small business, or opening of new employment places. This leaves the people with the belief that the politics are done 'up there' by known and unknown people who only care about their own profit. According to Goran, this is how the political leadership's absolute power has been created:

"They first make a circle of people they pay. The latter go through the villages and cities and start gathering allies. For example, they decide to say that the Bulgarians want to steal our history. So they gather (all together, from all villages). And start propaganda: 'Wow, all Macedonians are against

⁷ "Skopje 2014" plan was announced on February 4, 2010 through the publication of the virtual tour of the 'future-to-be' capital in 2011 and a press conference. Having been the first architectural plan for transformation of the Skopje centre since the devastating earthquake of 1963, the whole project was looking after societal validation on that basis. During the first four years of the projects' implementation, Skopje's main square and the central parts of the city were transformed in order to carry the physical agency of the current Macedonian official historical master narrative. The project is mainly consists of the construction of museums, governmental buildings and monuments of prominent historical figures. Nevertheless, the project appeared as a catalyst of some of the conflicts between the Macedonian state and its neighbours (mainly Greece and Bulgaria), evoking a big public discussion since the start of its implementation.

Bulgaria!’ and the media say so (...) this is politics – everything is made up and doesn’t make sense (...) everything has been decided [from above].’

The political power nucleus seems to be impenetrable for the ordinary people; it is distant and not willing to engage with them.

The governmental management of the economic relations in the state’s periphery obtains an ambiguous image; that depends on whether it concerns the degree of its oppressive interference or its poor distribution of national-market relations. The first case was reviled through the conversation with Goran⁸. In order to buy flour for his bakery factory he has to buy it from a specific provider who is “*a governmental person*” (“*chovek na Vladata*”) – that means that he is either corrupted or being in service of the ruling class). If he refuses to do so, tax audits and fines will follow, regardless if his documents are immaculate. Thus he follows the “*unwritten rules*”, because “*it is how it is*”.

The refusal on our informants’ behalf to infiltrate in the governmental economic ‘secondary regulatory networks’, as well as their disappointment by them, lead those villagers to long for a past that they perceive as having been much better. This helps us to reconstruct a peripheral identity, different from the one that is generally perceived as dominating in the nation-state’s circulating narratives.

Due to the diverse influences, the identity appears to be fluid and situational, i.e. it responds to a whole range of outside or inside influences. Being on the very point where opposing national ideologies, narratives and conflicts meet on a mixed ethnic ground offers us a specific picture of a case identity that responds to the present situation in various ways. As Dolno Dupeni’s population is isolated from the strong political centre in Skopje, they feel ostracised, forgotten, manipulated and left alone.

A whole set of coping strategies and compensatory mechanisms are evoked in order the everyday life to be given sense and a certain framework. These are being named with the term “Yugonostalgia”; they provide an ‘escape’ from the unsatisfactory present, which is fully loaded with hostile international politics that put into question the very existence of the Macedonian nation-state, as well as the memories of a violent past that had preceded Yugoslavia’s creation, and are used to create a ‘victimising’ image of that past and thus legitimising it as such.

Yugonostalgia: Praising the past, deprecating the present

“Yugonostalgia” does not function specifically in relation with this border region, nor to the borders of Macedonia as a whole; it functions within the societies in most of the countries that have been created after Yugoslavia’s dissolution. Nevertheless, it appeared to hold an important part in our interlocutors’ narratives, as they usually create the image of which is their identity here and now, which is the country’s situation currently, but most importantly Dolno Dupeni’s, through juxtaposing it to their stories referred to “that time”. This gives the sense of a decline from once being part of a greater country, functional economy, vital market, to a small marginal village, inhabited mainly by middle aged or elderly people with shattered streets and empty houses.

Most of the local young people are living in the bigger towns such as Bitola, or in the capital Skopje, and are coming back only to spend their weekends and holidays in the village. Despite the fact that the locals have turned their houses into guest-houses, in the past years they would rarely be fully booked by tourists,

tempted to visit the beach on the lake bank⁹. All this combined with the proximity to the closed border crossing, the impossibility of any trans-border contacts and the peripheral position compared with the inland, creates a reality for the border people in which they feel even more ‘trapped’.

In the case of Dolno Dupeni this longing for the past was often revealed in the context of informal talks or interviews with the informants, which were aiming to examine the Macedonian identity and thus were generally concerned with the current economic and political situation in FYROM. Therefore, the bitterness and dissatisfaction provoked by the present were evident through the regular comparisons with “*that time*” and how “*it was all so much better back then*”.

The term nostalgia itself is consistent of two Greek words, namely: “*nostos*” (homecoming) and “*algos*” (pain, ache) and is used to mark up a sentimental, bittersweet feeling or longing for past times (for more information see Boyum 2001). The existence of nostalgia in a society and the individuals is premised by three important conditions: a common sense of the linear and secular nature of time; a shared sense of the present as being insufficient and unsatisfactory; a material basis that represents the ‘golden age’ is needed, so the ‘image’ of the past in the modern times to be sustainable (Chase and Shaw 1989: 2-4).

Furthermore, nostalgia could be examined in individual terms, deflected through the scope of the self-experienced past. Often this is related with the memories for one’s better times (youth), in terms of economic, social, familial, political status, as well as his/hers feelings for being secure and protected on different levels. Thus, nostalgia will be hereby understood as a longing for an ‘imagined past’ which is used to offer satisfaction to the individual in order to feel secure, happy, fulfilled, proud of being a descendant of the respected state.

After Federal Yugoslavia’s dissolution, all the former’s ideological apparatus that nurtured three generations of Macedonian–Yugoslavs was substituted by the nationalistic discourses adopted by the governments. In our case, “Yugonostalgia” could be understood as a coping strategy for the population, answering to the common feeling of isolation among our informants.

In their memories Yugoslavia lives as a symbol of ‘golden times’: it had a huge territory, shared and open for all the states and their citizens; economic stability; strict division between the work forces; reasonable payment, and most importantly “an identity, larger than the ethno-national one, and for a vast imperial space that has shrunk” (Petrovic 2007 cited in Bancroft 2009: 17). As Petar told us¹⁰: “*There was this big identity – the Yugoslav one (...) under it we were all Serbs, Croats, etc. Comrade Tito gave us the right to be Macedonian nationals*”. The fact that the Macedonian nationality was not contested in these times, reveals the bitterness of the numerous conflicts between Macedonia and its neighbours nowadays, which are questioning some of their essential identity markers.

According to Alexander,¹¹ during the socialist past everyone knew who he/she was, which was his/her position; now, because of the unacceptable governmental politics, they have to find their own ways to cope. He was used to be a ‘gazda’¹²; nowadays, he has to be everything – genitor, cook, wine expert, manager. Owning a cafe, a shop and a restaurant, Alexander told us that it is hard for him to survive this marginal status, due to government’s poor management, compared with the socialist era’s unified market.

Our informants share the idea that one of Dolno Dupeni’s most significant problems is the fact that this once economically developed place now lies at the very edge of the present state and the market relations here are to a great extent absent. The closest market centre in the south west region of Macedonia is at Bitola;

⁹ The names of the informants are changed. Andrey (age 62), interviewed 28.08.2014, is the owner of several guesthouses at Dolno Dupeni.

¹⁰ Petar, (age 48), interviewed 30.08.2014.

¹¹ Alexander, (age 50), interviewed 29.08.2014.

¹² It means owner, boss.

therefore, it leaves the area within approximately 60 km without a relevant market place. According to Goran,¹³ even the market in Bitola is not providing the local producers with an adequate place for them to trade, since it is overwhelmed by Greek producers and companies who are offering their products at a lower price. The comparatively low prices in the region are both attractive to the people from the country's interior and for the foreigners who are visiting the area during the whole year to buy cheap products and to “*gamble and meet women*”. A place, called “The small Las Vegas”, is close to the border and attracts Greeks, providing them with the opportunity to spend there some hours, or a day or two on relatively low prices. This whole situation is one of the region's major income sources; nevertheless, it was always talked about with a certain criticism.

The complex ‘realities’ in Dolno Dupeni area are transforming it into a nexus where history, language and politics of the neighbouring nation-states are put into question, as well as into a ‘cleavage site’, due to the state policies for achieving economic and political centralization. Having to challenge these main pillars of the identity construction process itself and living in an atmosphere of general mistrust towards its own political leaders, the border population respond by questioning the master narrative that is attempted to be imposed from ‘above’. Despite of all the above, the border identity is to a great extent determined by the dialectical relationship between the dichotomy ‘us’ (Macedonians) and ‘they’ (outsiders). In this way, national identity's role remains of fundamental importance.

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¹³ Goran, (age 54), interviewd 31.08.2014.

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THE SARAJ OF NIYAZI BEG FROM RESEN/DRAGI TOZIJA HOUSE OF CULTURE AS A METAPHOR FOR THE TURKISH MINORITY IN RESEN

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Introduction

If you visit Resen, Macedonia's small and peaceful city, you don't have a chance to leave without seeing the Dragi Tozija House of Culture (hereafter DTHC), or as it was known with its former name, which is currently used by the Turkish minority, the Saraj of Niyazi Beg from Resen (hereafter the Saraj). Undoubtedly, this historical building that lies in a corner of this small city is its main tourist attraction.



Fig. 1: The Saraj of Niyazi Beg from Resen

However, it is quite interesting to note that a particular ethnic group is well aware of the Saraj's history and expresses great interest for this building while the other groups do not take the same stance. This situation is strongly connected with the political conjecture. As a former part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (hereafter Yugoslavia), Republic of Macedonia (hereafter Macedonia) tried to re-define all the territory and the identities of its inhabitants within its borders. Unlike pre-modern state formations, modern nation-state insists on regulating both its citizens and territory in an absolute, total manner (Calhoun 2007, 25; Foucault 2000, 151-153). In order to achieve this, it tries to homogenize different ethnic groups to a uniform entity.

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Throughout this process, if the state cannot manage to incorporate some ethnic groups into the nation, it excludes them from it. This exclusion can take different forms – economical, cultural and/or political. In this regard, changing the name and usage of the Saraj could be understood as a kind of cultural exclusion. Moreover, the building is also inextricably linked with the political, economical and social life of Turkish minority. The Saraj functions as a reminder of the Turkish minority's past; at the same time is a convenient starting point for us to studying the relationship between the building and the Turkish minority. From our perspective, the Saraj could be perceived as a metaphor for the Turkish minority. Bearing in mind all the above, our study's aim is to unfold certain aspects of the social and political life that characterize Resen's Turkish minority through ethnographic data which have been collected during our short research visit to the city in August, 2014.

The Research Site

Resen is located in the Prespa region in the southwest of Macedonia at the borders with both Greece and Albania. The region is named after the Prespa lakes. The bigger of the lakes serves as the water border between the three countries. The Prespa lakes are the center of the region. According to the 2002 census, Resen is quite a small city, with a total population of 16825. The ethnic composition of the population is as follows:

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Population</i>
<i>Macedonians</i>	<i>12798</i>
<i>Turks</i>	<i>1797</i>
<i>Albanians</i>	<i>1536</i>
<i>Others</i>	<i>409</i>
<i>Rhomas</i>	<i>184</i>
<i>Serbs</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>Vlachs</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Bosniaks</i>	<i>1</i>

Table. (Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office [RMSSO] 2002, 50)

As the table shows, after the Macedonians who constitute the large majority, the Turks are Resen's largest ethnic minority. However, throughout Macedonia, Macedonians and Albanians represent the overwhelming majority of the population and they're taking advantage of that fact in order to grab opportunities like education in their mother tongue or employment in the public sector.

Even since the era of the Federal Yugoslavia, Resen has been a famous for his agricultural products, especially its apple orchards. At that period, the products of Resen's farmers could have reached a bigger market throughout Yugoslavia; now things are quite different: after Yugoslavia's dissolution, their opportunities for having access to the markets have started to diminish. Nevertheless, as 2002 census indicated, the number of dwellings per household was significantly higher (1,69 dwellings per household) than the average for the whole Macedonia (1,23 dwellings per household) (RMSSO 2002, 18, 50). That could be seen as statistical evidence

regarding the region's high migration rate. Empty houses or seasonal houses belonged to emigrants is quite common a phenomenon in Resen.

Literature Review and Methodology

Unfortunately, except for few but important contributions, Macedonia's Turkish minority has generally been neglected by those scholars whom the objects of inquiry include ethnicity, Macedonian politics or minority policies. Jonathan Schwartz, an American anthropologist who has been working in Copenhagen for many years, is the only one that has conducted a fieldwork research at Resen. He visited the region in 1977 for the first time and thanks to his strong ties and familiarity with it he managed to write such a full-fledged study. He finished his work in 1995; until then, he had made repeated visits in the region (1978, 1985, 1989, 1993). It can be said that the most important feature of his study stems from his long-term relationship with the area that lasted more than 15 years, and the painstaking processing of his findings. In his study, Schwartz identified four pillars on which Resen's community was resting: schools, apples, local radio and holidays. These four factors contributed to developing a multi-cultural life in Resen despite Bosnian war's disruptive effects (Schwartz 2010).

In addition to Schwartz' work, Mandaci's article is a contribution to the literature on Macedonia's Turkish minority. Contrary to Schwartz, Mandaci focuses neither on Resen particularly nor employs the ethnographic method. He "aims at unfolding the political stand of the Turkish minority during the political reform process between 2001 and 2002 in Macedonia" (Mandaci 2007, 5). The main sources of his research are journals and related literature. Even though Mandaci's study remains important for the subject, we've taken Schwartz's work as our basis for our research.

As Emerson and others have pointed out "field notes are written accounts that filter members' experiences and concerns through the person and perspectives of the ethnographer; field notes provide the ethnographer's, not the members', accounts of the latter's experiences, meanings, and concerns" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 1995,13). From the Political Science's point of view, the perspective differs from that of Anthropology and International Relations Studies. On the contrary, our study attempts to go beyond the widespread divisions among social sciences by combining ethnography and political science. We should add here that Schwartz was an interlocutor with the Turkish minority as a "European"; we, though, according to its members, were "insiders" because we share with the interviewers the same ethnic identity and religion. This made our informants to be more open and uncensored about their life and inflexible regarding other ethnic groups and inter-ethnic relations. During our field research we opted for semi-structured in-depth interviews. Most of them were individually conducted and few were group-interviews. We mostly had conversations with members of the Turkish minority, but we also talked with Albanians and Macedonians in order to better understand the relations that existed between the Turks and other ethnic groups. Last but not least, since our group was consisted by a woman and a man, the informants, if they wanted to speak with a researcher of the same sex, had the chance to choose one of us.

Reflections from the Field

1. Entering into the Field: The Saraj of Niyazi Beg from Resen

When we visited for the first time the House of Niyazi Beg we saw a garden that was wide enough and well ordered. There was a signboard above the door; it was written in the Cyrillic alphabet, so we couldn't read it. Then, we entered to the main building and a Macedonian official welcomed us. This actually surprised us because we had expected a Turkish official in his place. At the same time, a group of Turkish ethnicity showed up; among them there was a man who lives in Macedonia and he became our translator. We joined them and the

official showed us the whereabouts. Actually, except from one or two photos, there was nothing to be related to Resneli Niyazi Beg. Almost the entire first floor is devoted to the exhibition of ceramic artifacts. Besides, the garden is used as a background for wedding photos. On the other hand, the Macedonian official didn't want to show to us the second and third floor, something we found very strange. Then we looked there in secret and realized the reason: The second floor was untended and messy. Many things like pictures, sculptures or even fishing tackle/equipment (!) were scattered around the floor, while there were two large holes on the roof.



Fig. 2: The holes on the roof of the Saraj

2. Defining our Research Questions

We left the house in research for people belonging to the Turkish minority. We walked across the main street and saw a carpet by a Turkish brand hanging in the window of one shop's front. There was a Turkish woman alone in the shop and we started talking to her. She complained about the low sales, and told us that the shop didn't belong to her but it was actually her sister's. In addition to that, her son was unemployed and she was hopeless about the whole situation, because the only way for him finding a job in the local municipality was to be closely related with people at a very high level of the Turkish Democratic Party. On the other hand, she told us that she was buying goods for her shop [her sister's shop] from Turkey, but then she added that Turkey didn't offer support to the Turkish ethnic minority as she ought to have done.

Being our first informant in our field research, she revealed to us and touched upon many issues about the way of life of a Turkish minority's member in Resen. In that, she helped us to realize the similarity between Niyazi Beg's house and the situation of Turkish minority in Resen. At first sight, they seemed to be in a good position, and well or totally accepted by the rest of the population and the local authorities. But if you go 'upstairs' or 'downstairs', you'll detect many problems lurking behind that facade. In the end, the main problem of our research transformed into a question: "Could the House of Niyazi Beg from Resen be seen as a metaphor for the Turkish minority's place in Resen?"

3. Aspects of Ethnicity: The Economic Situation in Resen

In almost all of the interviews, our informants talked about unemployment and, consequently, migration. Actually, unemployment across the country is running currently at 30% (RMSSO 2013, 9), while migration's main cause is youth unemployment. The fact that the rural population's unemployment rate approaches 40% is

due to Yugoslavia's collapse and the demarcation of new borders; that, in its turn had led to the confinement of market opportunities. Of course, this affected badly the local community as a whole, regardless of their members' ethnicity. For example, one of our informants sold his apple orchard due to low profit. On the other hand, one of our middle aged male informants, who had been working in a hotel that has been sold some years ago, is now employed on a temporary basis. Along with that, his son lives abroad and works for a chocolate factory. Though he graduated from the Macedonia's Police Academy, he couldn't find a job in the local municipality; on the contrary, less qualified people found a job because of their strong political connections. This brings us to the political parties' issue.

4. Political Parties: From Macedonia to Turkey

There are three Turkish political parties in Macedonia: The first one that has been established is the most powerful of them all: the Turkish Democratic Party which was founded in 1992. The other two are the Turkish Movement Party and the Movement for the Turkish National Unity. Regardless of their social or economic background, almost all of our informants talked about political parties, mostly in connection with the economic situation, and of course, employment. According to our informants, the existence of strong connections with the 'nomenclatura' of the Turkish Democratic Party is a sine qua non for finding a job in the public sector. Before the elections, the Turkish party bargains with the leading parties for getting a job quota. But only the party administrator's relatives or close supporters could get the advantage. Resen is a very small place, therefore all the members of the Turkish community are fully aware of this situation. These internal conflicts divide the community and cause its weakness in the political front.

On the other hand, the Turkish Democratic Party is receiving immense support from the Justice and Development's Party in Turkey. In general, the latter's policy towards Macedonia is supportive to integration but opposes assimilation. According to this policy, the Justice and Development Party wishes for the existence of a hegemonic Turkish party in Macedonia, but because of the party apparatus uses it for the personal interests' satisfaction, the Turkish Democratic Party avoids promoting this particular policy. The irony lies in the fact that Macedonia's Turkish Democratic Party takes the Justice and Development Party as a model for itself.

5. Popular Culture: Sport, Series and Internet

Turkey not only influences Resen's Turkish minority on the political level, but also on the social, economical and cultural ones. For example, one of the former politicians affiliated with the Turkish Democratic Party in Resen, told us that his family always watches Turkish TV channels; the same goes for most of our informants. Moreover, he added that if there would be a war declared in Macedonia and the Turkish channels wouldn't broadcast the event, he wouldn't hear anything about it! In a different context, we observed that the Turkish minority younger generation is very interested in, and well informed about, sport activities in Turkey, especially football, to the extent that one of our teenage informants surprised us because he knew more about Fenerbahce (one of the biggest football clubs in Turkey) than the male researcher. It should be emphasized that Internet, satellite television and low cost flights significantly facilitate the communication and transportation between the two places.

Apart from that, it was symbolically meaningful when we were in Resen, a Turkish TV series crew came to the Resen and hired local Turkish people for using them as extras in the series. Because of the fact that they are enjoying great popularity in Macedonia, Ivo Ivanovski, Macedonia's Minister of Information and Society, made in 2012 the following statement:

'Our own programs have started being broadcast after midnight because of Turkish soap operas. On every channel I can see a Turkish soap opera like "Muhtesem Yüzyıl" ["The Magnificent Century"], "Ezel", or "Binbir Gece" ["A Thousand and One Nights"]. They're all fascinating; but we've been under Turkish rule for 500 years — and that is enough.' (Hurriyet Daily News 14.11. 2012)

The minister's comment was an indication for us that the consumption of popular culture cannot be understood as a spare time activity. Popular culture could be used for the dissemination and strengthening of the official ideology (Gramsci 2012, 66). For this reason, debates on the Turkish series could be seen as a hegemonic struggle between the two governments. Therefore, the minister's reaction is also important for the understanding of inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia. Although Schwartz created an optimistic representation, from our perspective and the research we've been conducted, we came into the conclusion that profound tensions exist within Resen's Turkish minority.

By way of conclusion

Unlike Schwartz's relatively optimistic conclusions, our research led us to adopt a fairly cautious position. Even though we are totally agree with him as far as the importance of maintaining mutual and heterogeneous life in Resen is concerned, it is necessary to emphasize that the relations between and within ethnic groups seem fragile. Our differentiation from Schwartz's positions could be depended on the ethnographic stance and conjuncture. Whatever the situation might be, it is clear to us that the relative equilibrium tends to be disrupted. One of our older female informants expressed it very clearly and, perhaps, quite dramatically: "If they could find a chance, they wouldn't think twice: they would have drowned us in a spoon of water". On the other side of the coin, an Albanian male informant in his middle age told us: "I have a big Albanian flag in my house, and I think this state (he meant Macedonia) is not a real state, it can't be such". Of course, he was referring to a homogeneous nation state. At this point, it is crucial for us to stress nationalism and state's symbiotic status (Heywood 2007, 203-204).

In this context, Macedonian nationalists burned down one of our informant's restaurants. As it is well known, the burning of real estates' properties is an action against minorities' members that it has had widespread use throughout the history — for example, putting into fire minorities' neighborhoods in the Anatolia during the Late Ottoman period. The importance of those actions can neither be underestimated nor defined as exceptional cases (Etöz & Esin 2012, 9-52).

Additionally, forcing people to migrate is a policy that nation states usually adopt. Nowadays, the members of the Turkish minority are being forced to migrate mainly because of their exclusion from the economic activity. On the other hand, it should be noted that, along with the Turkish minority's exclusion from the economy, also broader economic difficulties on the national level motivate migration to the European countries. So, as it applies to everywhere else, migration is a multifactorial phenomenon in Macedonia.

In Resen, you could see at least three different signboards for the "Saraj"; in none of them, though, you will find Niyazi Beg's name. Approximately ten years ago, the name of the Saraj was changed to Dragi Tozija House of Culture. All the members of the Turkish minority, including children, knew the original name of the Saraj and Niyazi Beg. But when we talked with two Macedonian college students, they knew nothing about Niyazi Beg and told us that Dragi Tozija was the owner of the building.

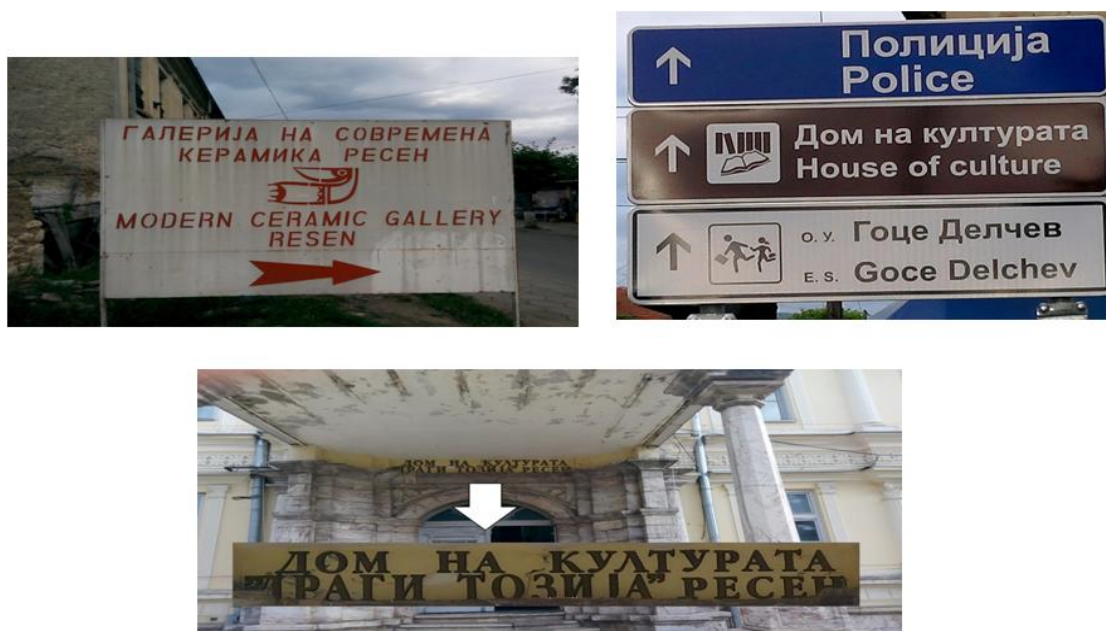


Fig. 3. Different signboards related to the Saraj in Resen

In our view, there is great similarity between the situation of the Saraj and that of the Turkish minority at large. Just as the name of Niyazi Beg was removed from the building, slowly but steadily, the Turkish minority is removed from Resen. As we have already noted, it is hard to see that at first sight, but there are holes in the roof.

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MORALITY BETWEEN COOPERATION AND COMPETITION: TIMES OF CRISIS AND LOCAL FEELINGS AT KONITSA

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This article explores the ways in which individualism and market competition, on the one hand, and cooperation and alternative ways of living at a low cost on the other, coexist. It looks at the different layers of both competing and collaborating, and focuses on the underlying ethical behavioural patterns, in an attempt to emphasize as well as to decipher multiple contrasts: firstly, the concurrent condemnation and celebration of individualism; secondly, the atavistic revival of the flock/herd mentality and its simultaneous neutralization as an alternative option; and thirdly, the commodified morality as a response which allows the business category group analysed in this paper to barely survive, while for other types of economic actors it works in entirely different ways. Structural elements shape moral attitudes, with these latter being dynamic and material, locally determined but also influenced by a global phenomenon – the crisis. The particular configuration of individualism and cooperation is informed by all these elements.

Individualism and not only

Behind a breathtakingly beautiful landscape as well as a quiet atmosphere, in the backstage of tourism management in Konitsa, cooperation and competition between businessmen owning tourist resorts is the theatre of struggle on which the tourist gaze¹ is founded. The crisis entered the scene, making its presence felt in a discourse which indexes a common feeling of “plighted citizenship” (Benson 2011) with reference more to the local authorities rather than to the national government, as one hotel owner has put it: “The municipality does not want to help”. There is a strong individualistic sense among hotel owners themselves, as they almost unanimously pointed to the lack of collaboration at this level. On the flip side of individualism’s coin, another picture appears, which is apparently shared by all of them: the extended families help significantly the business. From financial support, to actual manual work in decorating or maintaining the facilities, their role is undeniable and not hidden at all by the business owners. A recurrent motif relates to the “hard times” of the last years, which allows for a possible correlation: the participation of relatives in the tourist business might be seen as a reaction to the crisis, as an attempt for resisting to its damaging effects. Economic collapse, or even the prospect of it, often leads people to turn to various forms of coming together and rearranging their interactions according to the Marxian principle “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs” (Graeber 2011, 94-118). In the case of these Konitsa’s dwellers, this principle takes over family relations, while in a paradoxical way the actual owners embrace a discourse of *homo economicus* — especially if they do not need to worry too much about actually having customers.

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¹ According to John Urry (2002, 1), “when we ‘go away’ we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so. In other words, we gaze at what we encounter. And this gaze is (...) socially organized and systematized (...)”.

We could identify two main elements in the narratives of individualism embraced by the hotel owners. Firstly, the legacy of having started their business with limited resources coupled with risking on their own and working very hard. The owner of hotel *Panorama* worked in hotels and gave up his job in the public space sector –considered both a secure and a more than sufficient resource for the well-being for the rest of one’s life– almost twenty years ago, in order to make his personal dream a reality along with his wife. Building everything from scratch, Yiotis and Eleni began with a hall in which they offered to organize parties, gradually extended both the establishment and the services they were providing, to a full-working hotel including an open-air pool with a bar. The owner of hotel *Gefyri* tells the story of an ambitious man who used his freshly acquired background in Economics to start a business by the book at the surprising age of twenty, almost simultaneously with his older counterparts. Struggling to win a well-deserved place in the market, Dimitri, owner of the newly opened hotel *Rodovoli*, is a young entrepreneur who just quit his regular job as policeman just in order to start a business of which he previously had only basic knowledge. We see, therefore, that narratives of professional life courses underpin the hardship discourse. Secondly, complementary to a discourse of merit, lies the complaint about the others’ unwillingness to collaborate. However, the way this aspect is referred to takes various forms, depending on the economic and social capital one possesses. While young Dimitri expresses disappointment at failing in repeated attempts to get his peers involved in common projects, the owner of *Gefyri* portrays the issue in a different way, affirming that “these new ones think they know everything” and that they do not come to ask for advice from those occupying a rather established position in the local tourism business. Individualism constitutes a resource for coexisting pride and disappointment; however, the percentage that each of it has in a certain case depends on the extent to which the actor occupies a socially and economically more or less privileged place.

Introducing Post-Modernism

The substantial support from relatives is openly admitted by these ‘*homini economici*’; furthermore, it is quite often made visible to the customers. Paintings made by daughters or mothers decorate the large reception rooms, as well as all the guests’ rooms, of both *Panorama* and *Rodovoli* hotels. Products such as marmalade and *tsipouro* representing a family activity belong to the take away commodities available at the reception. Locally hand-made furniture (sometimes manufactured or carved personally by the hotel owners) is a common feature. Moreover, textile accessories decorating the rooms of *Panorama* are each manually embroidered by Eleni. For her and Yiotis, the distillery where *tsipouro* is produced occupies a special and easily accessible place for tourists, as well as the workshop where her daughter paints – no doors separate the latter from the hallway on which all the customers (except those resting in rooms for disabled people) pass inevitably on the way to their suits. Through these displays, an imagery of united families plays a key role in the visitors’/tourists’ gaze.

The extended family that comes together and unites its efforts for a common purpose is correlative to a post-modern phenomenon: Through nostalgia, the societal and economic arrangement of the flock², which had been around for a long time in this region before, is revived and reproduced. This atavism cannot recuperate the initial dimension – time is irreversible; it rather indexes post-modernism whereby former ways of living and making a living are modified, and subsequently integrated into the current dominant mode(s) (Hickel & Khan 2012, 214). On checking in at a hotel in Konitsa, one also purchases the imagery created through tactical displays of hard work and support the hotel owners are receiving from members of the extended family. The

² This “arrangement of the flock” required specific work from any member of an extended family, which normally used to cooperate with other families, thus forming what has been described as “tseligato” in the pastoral transhumance’s context (Campbell 1964, 150-212; Dalkavoukis 2011, 32-33). Moreover, As Claudia Chang (1993, 689) stresses, “pastoral transhumance appears to be more than a ‘resource getting strategy’; it is also defined by the social and cultural relations that shape both a community’s internal organization and its view of the outside world”.

consumers buy these commodities in order to “get the experience provided by them” (Žižek 2009, 53), to render their lives “meaningful” (ibid) by exchanging their income for pre-packed, commodified moral and social models and values. The intertwining of individualism with flock-style forms of cooperation results in the free-market competition that absorbs into its very structure formerly alternative, or opposed forms of making a living. A new compatibility effect is achieved by selectivity and context-erasing [είναι δόκιμη η διατύπωση:]. Sustained help from the nuclear or extended family in a competitive economy concomitantly recalls a time when shepherds inhabited the land; at the same time, it denies the legacy of such a return, due to the free market competition discourse which is being kept intact in its central place that had enjoyed prior to the crisis’s eruption. To every corner a visitor of Panorama might turn his or her eyes there is an abundance of signs that build the image of a welcoming home, where the owners spend their whole time, night and day. An open crease above the kitchen door allows to those dining in the main hall to see Eleni cooking all the food they’re being served. The commodified responsibility and personal care at *Rodovoli* is depicted in the furniture designed by the owner and his brother, and manufactured with wood from Aetomilitsa, in a top electricity saving technology due to which a two month bill does not exceed 300 euros, in beds fitted with expensive mattresses and lavender packs for aroma therapy, and projects for a shop in which the two men are planning to sell sweets, drinks and other products from all local producers. Each hotel owner navigates in his discourse between merit and competition on the one hand, and, on the other, care for the society and the development of the region. The presence of these components varies according to each case’s needs.

Morality, commodities, and coming together

It is in the claim to one’s own morality that individualism and its opposite intertwine, rendering visible a passage between these two sides of the same business. All the hotel owners, and the owner of a rafting centre, declare their willingness to support the region’s development as a whole and the authorities in their effort in achieving that goal; furthermore, some of them have repeatedly proposed innovations on these grounds. Still, weather successful or not, old or new in the business, these hotel owners do not recall being represented as voices that have something to say when it comes to improving conditions and facilities in Konitsa. Nikos, the owner of the rafting centre that actually “put Konitsa on the tourist map”, therefore creating the need of accommodation resorts which opened a relatively secure space for those willing to go into the hotel business, is the only one who is collaborating, or at least it seems to conducting with all the hotel owners, and also the only one that has managed to have an impact on the development of the region through his business. He also differs from the others in his positive opinion about the union –whose existence is not exactly recognized by all of its members–, but he shares the others’ claim to personal integrity in work activity. When he started his business, the ethical dimension was limited to hard work and doing business for himself; shortly after, though, he gradually became concerned about the importance of organizing and promoting the natural heritage, as well as other benefits for the community. The shift from individualism to cooperation, that gradually emerges, after a certain initial success has been achieved, is a way in which these two contradictory behaviours interact: both of them are permanently present –in tourist development at least, if not universally in all human activity, someone else seems to always benefit besides the one working directly in the stated purpose–, but the more the others recognize the relative advantages, the more cooperation stands a chance to enter into the picture. In the same line of argument, Nikos appears to be the most involved in the institutionalized form of cooperation therein, namely the union.

The fact that cooperation and reciprocity never drops to zero is correlative to Graeber’s affirmation that “communism is already here” (2009), meaning that working together in the prospect of a common purpose is the basic form of social and economic arrangement, and moreover, the only one that, by definition, works into everyone’s advantage. The owner of the *Gefyri* hotel is the one that most actively cooperates with Nikos, and the most successful among his peers. At the opposite side of the picture, the new *Rodovoli* hotel is struggling to

be recognized as a legitimate player in the business. Prominent, privileged entrepreneurial positions work against possible new entries in the terrain: *Rodovoli* is the only hotel equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for disabled people, yet it cannot gain its fourth star rating due to providing only three (and not four) languages spoken by the employed staff. While at first sight the commodification of work ethics –Dimitri and his brother use the social media to make known the process whereby they personally process the wood for the furniture in the hotel– at first sight indexing consumption’s more segmented ways specific to post–Fordism, it turns out to be a response to the crisis, a strategy for overcoming failure: “Tactical displays of hard work and industry help secure a social reputation and mitigate the moral hazard that the *sorriness* of the business will be taken as evidence of the *sorriness* of the owner” (Benson 2011, 30). Peter Benson’s tobacco farmers from North Carolina share with Konitsa’s hotel owners a sense of “plighted citizenship”: threatened economically by the crisis, with very little support from national or local authorities, they feel that they have done too much for the community and, in return, they have been rewarded with the peril of losing their jobs and way of living. Structural problems due to which the crisis appeared, and due to which they specifically relive the crisis in a certain way, are perceived as an agency that harbour their deprivation of merits and dignity. Unable to locate the source of such an agency, they retreat in a specific form of individualism, one that revives an idealized past which allows for the organization of life around the socio-economical unit of the flock.

Moral capital functions as compensation for the loss or lack of financial one. Embracing a soft form of victimization is something complementary to work, and emphasizes their stated devotion to it: despite the hardships endured, they proudly go on in running their businesses. The idea of enjoying what one does lies at the heart of the moral model: filling every aspect of one’s life with ‘*meraki*’, it fulfils the role of a situated categorical imperative. The constant recurrence of this notion, ‘*meraki*’, indicates what is “morally at stake” (Benson 2011, 29): the “discourses and practices that count as morality for particular institutions, groups, and individuals within particular situations and contexts” (Zigon 2011, 8). In times of crisis, hotel owners in the small town of Konitsa submit themselves to a discourse of merit, inherently linked to the local history and particularities. There is no explicit complete moral model, but rather an embodied morality, under the form of *habitus*, of “socially performed techniques [...] not thought out before, not noticed, simply done” (Zigon 2011, 10). In other words, morality is material, immanent, and reactionary. Enacting morality does not come after its full acknowledgement by the subjects, but at the same time, the two processes represent the two sides of one and the same reality. It is not priority to the retreat into the units of flocks that the discourse underpinned by the particular form of interplay described in the previous paragraphs is formed. Acting and explaining one’s position in the theatre of social and economic struggle are two processes that happen at the same time and influence each other. When it appears that the one precedes the other, that is an illusory effect, which is created through looking from a biased perspective – that of the discursive level. When the hotel owners declare their devotion to their business and complain about the others’ harsh individualism, their narrative seems to come exclusively after having gone through such experiences. This effect deems their suffering valid for arguing in favour of their strong moral profile.

Structural inequality

Moral capital³, too problematic to be turned into something measurable and instantiate a hierarchy, has to be forced into a narrative if it has to be used as a strategy for overcoming economic loss. As such, then, the

³ The term is used to describe the connection of economic and commercial activity with morality, “as a spiritual element of capital or a kind of spiritual capital” (Wang 2015, 55). According to Ratnapala (2003, 214-215), “the concept of capital has more recently been extended to conditions that help production by facilitating coordination among parties to transactions. This form of capital may or may not be ‘owned’ by individuals or firms, but it provides them with clear advantages.

imagery of morality provides an escape from reality, obscuring the structural elements due to which this group has experienced the crisis in a particular way. That a common structure of feeling among these individuals could be identified indicates that certain elements in the economical and social premises have triggered a behavioural response to a shared issue. Why would they suddenly all feel there is something at stake in stating their moral status, in addition to pointing at each other's lack of cooperation and of help from the authorities, when most of them have led their business for years in the same way, targeting a relatively stable variety of customers? Eleni has always cooked food for her guests and embroidered drapes for their rooms, and one could easily imagine, contrary to how semi-deserted the hotel looked this summer, how until a few years ago it has been full. After all, the huge guest book is a pretty obvious proof of this. Part of the answer lies, perhaps, in the recently (post-crisis) liquidated hotel in Konitsa. Of course, more pieces of the puzzle have to be investigated; nevertheless, this does not mean that those that have been deciphered, even partially, or modestly, do not depict a true problem, a real social and economic loss for the hotel owners, and consequently –in the same line of thought with what has been presented in this paper– for the local community as a whole.

A comparison between the commodification of morality practised by these hotel owners and that embraced by corporations mostly through corporate social responsibility could shed light upon the structural nature of the problem. Whereas multinationals have assimilated the criticism made to them (Benson & Kirsch 2010, 466) and managed to increase their profits by huge marketing campaigns that depict them as moral agents and, consequently, as moral authorities (Rajak 2011, 28), in the case of entrepreneurs pursuing small-scale business, such professing of one's own moral character constitutes an open claim for personal worthiness, and is barely managing to keep the business in place. Moreover, corporate social responsibility policies represent a way of managing grave accusations regarding unethical practices and directly provoked harm, in such a manner that ultimately the real issues have apparently been addressed or solved, whereas in reality they are continuing to be present. Transnational companies' claim to behaving based on moral principles constitutes for them a source for generating profits and the continuation of harm generating practices, while for individuals seeking small profits through a business limited to a fixed place, harm generating practices comparable even considering the scale reduction do not enter the picture. Quite on the contrary, these hotel owners, who honestly enjoy making people feel good throughout their stay in Konitsa, engage in a personal relationship with their consumers, one that mostly works against presumable measures to increase profits by harming relations of production or consumption.

While corporations' main goal aims at increasing revenues and minimizing costs engenders the side effect of alienating jobs in which one can hardly recognize benefits for society, local businessmen involved in tourism have a direct contact with the "end customers": as Eleni puts it, they are welcoming them into "their home". Not surprisingly, a large part of the satisfaction due to work comes from the clients' expression of their gratitude/satisfaction, which quite often becomes emotional. Eleni admits crying at times when she's reading impressions written in the guest book or she's looking at gifts she has received from tourists. Even if the business element is undeniable, it seems that, compared with transnational corporations' way of doing business, the priorities of most of those that belong to this particular socio-economical category differ. As an analogy to David Graeber's observation on King's soldiers (2011, 49-50), I would argue that these hotel owners as well as the owner of the rafting centre have figured out a way to get paid and integrate the advanced capitalist way of living and ethics by pursuing some kind of higher moral ideal than simple profit making, or at least by

Morality falls within this extended meaning of capital". Moreover, she/he [??] distinguishes "moral capital" from "social capital", which refers to "social organizations and the concept of civil society" (ibid, 215).

imagining that they act likewise. Ironically, they belong to those that have been dramatically affected by the crisis, and their retreat into individualism is coupled with nostalgia for the old times of flocks precisely because a form of collaboration has to exist, no matter how minimal. Perceived as a secure retreat from the perspective of the currently collapsing neoliberal economy model, cooperation, assistance and offering without necessarily calculating the cost/benefit ratio are organized within the boundaries of the extended family.

Conclusion

Morality is not completely commodified when it comes to local tourist business in Konitsa, because its *homo economicus* is not separated from those to whom he is offering his services; he is humane, is engaged in complex social relations, has strong feelings and opinions about the community in which he lives. As one local summed it up, “everything in Konitsa is personal, people are crazy”. This ‘craziness’, however, is what makes one authentically caring about what happens in the world, is what makes one also engaging into conflictual situations, but at the same time it possesses everything a transnational corporation misses and desperately tries to replace by a conflated language: morality in which one actually believes, because it is present before one’s eyes, because it is palpable, and because it strongly relates to the material conditions as well as personal feelings. Morality’s materiality, the fact that it is embedded into everyday activities, works against the process of becoming commodified. It is not something that can be abstracted and packed-up in order to be advertised and promoted as an ideology on a global scale. In the prospect of being deprived of their dignity, individuals cling on to their claim to morality and of being worth as a result of their work and devotion they have put into their work. Reinforced individualism is a response to a threat; it’s not a premeditated algorithm of action, but a minimum reaction born out of the instinct for self-preservation. Cooperation is missed or, up to a point, desired, but, at least partially, a structural feature prevented these individuals from helping each other. The ability to taking each other into consideration by going beyond the economic strings that most of the time they keep them at a distance has been taken away from them, and the crisis brought into the light the harmful mediating element at work by increasing its effects. Displaying their moral feelings is their response to the crisis, a response that has its one foot outside the mediating structures, and in line with their previous moral practices: what they’re asking for is not to be prevented from working for a higher ethical ideal than profit, or at least from believing that the latter really exists.

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HOSPITALITY ON SALE: DOES RUNNING A FAMILY BUSINESS IN A SMALL COMMUNITY RAISE A CHALLENGE TO THE FAMILY OR TO THE BUSINESS? A CASE STUDY OF THE SMALL FAMILY HOTEL BUSINESSES IN KONITSA, GREECE

Tetiana Lialka* & Ufuk H. Toraman**

Introduction

In this ethnographic report from the field, we're dealing with the institution of family and its relation to business and family business traditions. We're also discussing some past and present challenges that families have to cope with after the global financial crisis's onset in Epirus region, more particularly at the town of Konitsa.

According to research findings, in rural and regional tourism destinations, families are generally the owners of small businesses. In general, the field has three aspects that through their interaction describe or characterize family business: family, business and ownership (Smardova & Elexa 2013, 98). In the process of analyzing small hotel family businesses (or, as they have been called in certain literature on the subject, "hospitality businesses" — Smardova & Elexa 2013, 98) we've focused our analysis on the interplay of notions of culture, hospitality traditions, and history of family business in a region of Epirus.

Based on our field findings and observations, we're documenting here the phenomenon of the family as a small business management unit in Konitsa engaged in 'selling' itself in order to make the services it offers more personalized and attractive to its potential clients, who after the financial crisis's eruption have restricted their visits to the city. Families in the hospitality business are selling to the visitors their daily life routine, their everyday chores, and feature regional traditions in order to meet tourists' expectations regarding how genuine the services and the overall setting are. We have identified certain similarities between two kinds of family enterprises: transhumant households and small hotel businesses, mainly on the ground of the everyday chores that family members have to perform and the existing socio-economic environment.

Descriptions

The term "small family hotel business"⁵⁶ designates a hotel, a guesthouse, or a resort that is distinguished by all or most of the following elements:

- 1) The household manages the business. However, it may choose to employ one or several non-family employees in a paid relationship.
- 2) Family members do not receive a regular wage; they share the hotel's revenues and profits.

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⁵⁶ The term "small and medium sized tourism enterprise" is used as an alternative. See Buhalis, 1994, 1999; Buhalis & Cooper 1998; Buhalis & Main 1998.

- 3) It has only so many customers they can attend to by their own labour and few wage earning employees, if any at all.
- 4) It sells products that it produces on site, such as jams, alcoholic drinks and so on. But that applies only to smaller lodgings, because in the case of a bigger hotel, it wouldn't be possible to produce enough products to satisfy the anticipated demand.
- 5) The hotel is also the family's place of residence.

There are no precise boundaries between a small hotel and a bigger one. The features listed above pertain to small hotels; the absence of one or several of these features does not mean that the hotel doesn't fall in the category of the smaller accommodation places. The more of those features a hotel does not possess, the closer it resembles to a big hotel. The term "duties" is used for tasks that (1) require labour and that (2) are either necessary for, or contribute to, the comfort and needs of both the family and the hotel's customers.

Historical and Cultural Background

According to some researchers, family structure in Greece may be characterized according to the following terms:

"The couple had children. The boys got married, their wives came to live with them and their parents; the separation and the transmission of property into equal parts took place upon the death of the father or upon the marriage of all boys. As a result, nuclear family structure would dominate with a small proportion of complex households in such societies (...) This pattern was typical for Southeastern Europe including continental Greece" (Kaser 1996).

By using the term "household" in our work, we mean members of one family who all work in a hotel. In addition to that, the term is perceived as a sole decision making mechanism, meaning that there would be no conflicting individual economic decisions by individual members of the household. We further assume that the household is a socio-economic unit, the total income of which is to be pooled; in other words, household members earn and spend their income together. In our case study, household signifies members of a nuclear family rather than an extended one.

Complex households are a phenomenon that attracted our interest because, while we were interviewing the small hotel business owners, we also observed that families very often run small hotel and hospitality businesses. Moreover, family structure and traditions within it have been transformed over time. Nevertheless, we managed to locate certain unifying factors among families that have managed to survive and families that have in their possession small hotel businesses.

We believe that the people from a certain territory, through their cultural memory⁵⁷ and traditions, retain the mechanisms of coping with economic crisis, changing only the way it is done (Knight 2012). We observed, that, out of the four hotels' owners we interviewed, three of them have been running the hotels with their family. Moreover, each family member would have some specific duty to perform in the whole business. Interestingly enough, women were those who normally would be engaged in handmade decoration. Many years after, since the crisis's eruption, we've noticed that many public servants were starting to leave the big cities, return to their ancestral place with their families and start a new business there.

⁵⁷ According to Assman & Czaplicka (1995, 129), "Cultural memory has its fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance). We call these 'figures of memory'".

Employment and Labour

In the beginning of the 20th century there were limited employment opportunities in the mountainous region of Epirus (Caftanzoglou 1994, 80). In the context of our fieldwork, we observed the community of Konitsa in a period of time when the financial crisis had already broken out and the relevant socio-economic consequences were visible enough. Our interlocutors informed us that Konitsa's main, if not exclusive, source of income comes from the high tourist seasons – summer and winter. As it is to be expected, the necessary amount of labour is not always the same throughout the year. Small hotel businesses have different high and low seasons, and that depends on various factors. High season may be defined as the period of the year when the hotel needs more labour input compared to the other seasons, while during the low season the opposite is the case. Otherwise, the younger people are trying to find their way in bigger cities. Therefore, we could assume that nowadays, as it was the case decades ago, there are limited employment opportunities.

One notable advantage of the small hotels is that the family does not necessarily have to hire new employees to make up with increasing demand; instead, they would choose to work more hours per day. In the case of a big hotel, employers would have to pay more for the extra working time of their additional staff, something that would decrease their profit margins. On the other hand, during the low seasons, the hotels would have need less staff. In this case, the household members might decide to send one or several of them out of the hotel for finding a temporary wage-earning job. Bigger hotel establishments are often not allowed by law to lay off their employees easily. As we have already observed, along with flexibility regarding the total number of the additional labour force, it is at the discretion of the smaller hotels' owners to decide what they will do with their extra employees. In the latter case, the families have total freedom as far as the overall services they are going to provide by only using the labour force of their members as well as how many of those services they would like to buy from outside of them.

In the case where families want to reduce the labour force they are investing into producing certain services, they might outsource some of them — for example, cleaning or cooking. This could also be called “buying leisure”, since in monetary terms, outsourced services would cost more than exclusively producing them in the hotels. Contrary to that, it is also possible for small hotels to stretch input. Families might want to have bigger total revenues by utilizing an additional labour force. For instance, they could produce food items by using secondary raw material (e.g., pickles, yoghurt, etc.), or they could grow their own crops, something that is not uncommon. As they are investing more labour force into producing services by themselves, they accordingly could see increasing returns. According to what we have observed, by way of stretching their resources, they would spend less for input services and compensate that with their own labour force to the greatest possible degree.

During our interviews with the hotel owners, they admitted that the number of guests was on the decline due to the economic crisis but that this has not significantly affected their well-being. The asset small hotels have for overcoming the crisis is their flexibility. By being able to adjust the amount of labour force needed to sustain their business and increasing its marginal utility, they become more flexible and resistant to a potential crisis than the big hotels that rely solely on their employees. Families' successful resistance to financial hardship lies also in the unity of their members, the mutual trust that exist among them, as well as their opposition against the outer community.

Competition

That brings us to the next point of our discussion: the competition in the context of a small community, where its inhabitants know each other well. As some hotel owners told us, it is easier for them to hire a member of the nuclear family (or of the extended one) than someone they do not know. On the one hand, this is justified on

economic grounds; on the other, we could observe that relying on their kin as potential employees is a sign of unity against the rest of the community.⁵⁸ We've opted precisely for this interpretation, as our respondents would have indicated about inhabitants' growing individualism, even though they are all tightly connected and known to each other within the community. Moreover, our interviewers highlighted the indifference of locals to the way town is developing.

Nitsiakos (1985) describes the importance of kinship relations in business, even though he specifically discusses flock households. For example, he underlines the importance of the daily social interaction between kin members and mutual trust. Even though kinship and involvement in business activities are not directly linked, we were able to notice that the pattern of reproducing solidarity among families that have small hotel business is the same as the one that exists among those who are taking care for their flocks. It is worthwhile to note that, due to the transformation of the family's nature and structure, family kinship has nowadays evolved into a problematic social relationship. Therefore, if we've been informed about a kinsman's hiring, it would probably have been a very close relative. From our fieldwork we came to the conclusion that all the interviewed families were constituted of more or less close relatives, not distant kin.

We could see that the families became more or less nuclear and distant from the community. We might draw on an empirical example from fieldwork, where one of our hypotheses was that the small community's members collaborate tightly and support each other on a daily basis, and that solidarity plays an important role. However, what we discovered is that families that own small hotel businesses do not in fact cooperate with other members of community.

Our suggestion is that, in the case of small hotel owners, their top priority is to enhance the prosperity of their own household, rather than following (implicitly or explicitly) the communal traditions regarding the business management by families. Moreover, as Nitsiakos notes, no direct link was evident in the past between kinship and the flock's management. Each member of the community had had at his disposal a pool of potential cooperators (virtually consisting of the whole community) from which he could choose to associate with according to the circumstances (Nitsiakos 1985, 60).

Another challenge that they are facing those who run family business is that the overall process can put a lot of strain on the entrepreneur and his/her family (Hallak et al. 2012, 389). Family businesses have many interwoven agendas: family life is intersecting with business, culture and traditions with the demands of the free market's competition. Analyzing our fieldwork findings, and comparing them to previous research conducted on kinship and households, we came to the conclusion that regardless of the reasons for which a family decides to join into a common business, this inevitably causes morality to come into the equation of the existing relationships. In other words, what occurs is the prioritizing of meaningful relationship: at one point or another, each family member should choose which kind of relationship is more important: business or family bonds. Family bonds and relationships were considered to be more important and valuable than business. Decision-making would not be primarily influenced by business priorities but by ethical considerations towards brothers and distant kin.

Another moral aspect that emerges, which is comparatively due to the new economic circumstances, is that a family has to "sell" itself in a way so as to attract clients. As Urry (2002) has observed, the management of a hotel by a family creates a particularly hospitable atmosphere, an environment that recalls that of a

⁵⁸ We could also refer here to this unit as a kind of "community of practice". According to Gherardi, Nicolini and Odela (1998, 279) "referring to a community of practice is not a way to postulate the existence of a new informal grouping or social system within the organization, but is a way to emphasize that every practice is dependent on social processes through which it is sustained and perpetuated, and that learning takes place through the engagement in that practice". Although this notion is usually connected with educational practices, we can discern in family hotel entrepreneurship the most important traits suggested by Eraut 2002.

'genuine' local house, with 'genuine' food, made by the owners themselves. According to the findings of research conducted over family hotel business in Austria, products and services offered by a family business are more personalized on a customer basis than that occurs in non-family businesses (Hallak et al. 2012, 294).

On the one hand, the image of the 'typical' that is created for the tourist's sake is a survival strategy for the business and a way for it to attracting clients. On the other hand, it illustrates what a family normally does: it creates an atmosphere of a home's warmth and hospitality. In other words, when a family 'is selling itself' this means that a family is selling to the visitors the idea that they are guests in someone's home. That is accomplished with handmade things, by traditional decorations and by a woman cooking for guests. As over the last decades services have been depersonalized, in its turn the adoption of this attitude makes sense as a personalizing marketing strategy (Nunes & Kambil 2001; Murthi & Sarkar 2003). Therefore, not only do businesses' small-scale play a significant role but also the fact that the families are in charge of everyday routine in the hotels. Moreover, due to high advertising expenditure, the related strategies have now undergone a critical change; the desirable message is now transferred between customers rather than through explicit and expensive advertising. In this way, the 'loyal' clients are staying with the same hotel, or, rather, family.

The family 'selling' process itself may be perceived through the simple description of similarities between daily house chores and hotel duties. The latter ones are barely different than those that are performed in a large household. Roughly speaking, these duties include cleaning, cooking, serving, overall maintenance and management. Management is generally an easy task, and, as we have witnessed, in smaller hotels it might be considered as non-existent. This could be easily understood given these duties' aims. The families, both as hotel owners and kinsmen, aim to provide a healthy and comfortable environment, in the first case to its customers and in the second for themselves. Nevertheless, the critical question for each family is the following one: what comes first, business or family? Of course, in the hotel these duties are being performed on a much bigger scale, and that demands extra working hours. The family members' compensation for those extra hours are the fees that are collected from customers as well as the fact that they do not have to look for paid employment outside the family setting. As to be expected, the division of labour in a hotel is very similar to that of a household. Since duties are almost identical, it is more efficient when people carry out tasks analogous to the ones they are accustomed to.

An economically efficient way of dividing tasks among household members is to assign to each member tasks they are accustomed to perform, that is, tasks in which they have a comparative advantage over the other family members. According to our informants' narratives, the female members of the household are undertaking the tasks of cleaning and cooking, while the male members usually take on management responsibilities. Cooking and then cleaning are the first tasks to be outsourced when confronted with a scarce labour force. If needed, a secretary assists the male members in their managerial duties. Tasks concerning services (e.g., room service) are reserved for the younger members of the family and hired employees, if there are any.

On the other hand, the self-image that families create for their guests should also be viewed critically, especially the woman's role in business. As Day indicates, "the challenges they [the women] encounter are consistent with challenges that family business women in general encounter, including (a) unpaid labour, (b) lack of job description, and (c) difficulty balancing family and work. The relevant literature suggests that their contributions are often treated as invisible" (2013, 127).

Conclusion and Further Research

In this descriptive paper we touched upon questions of family, business and the tradition of family business as well as some challenges that families in the Epirus region have faced in the past, but also to some others that they are facing now, and particularly in Konitsa, after the global financial crisis's eruption.

It is the general tendency but also a particular feature of the Epirus region featuring transhumant households, that the family structure is undergoing major transformations. Nevertheless, some challenges and ethical dilemmas existing in families that run small hotel business can be traced back at the early 20th century to families managing flocks. Among the major challenges they are facing is an ethical decision on which of the two is most important: family or business. Of related relevance are the moral issues that arise in each and every decision-making process concerning business management. Correspondingly, co-operation or, rather, family unity against community solidarity and the differential uses of the labour force on an unequal basis within families are also major issues that families have to deal with. In Konitsa, local small hotel businesses do not cooperate; families that run business are to some extent sealed off from the community.

Along with this, modern families in Konitsa that run small hotel businesses are, as our research has demonstrated, better equipped to withstand the consequences of the financial crisis. Yet, they have to “sell” themselves, their everyday life and local practices, manifested as local traditions in order to attract customers and secure their loyalty. Overall, the line drawn between family and business oriented decision-making processes, the balancing of these two worlds, but also the relations among families and the community deserve long-term detailed investigation.

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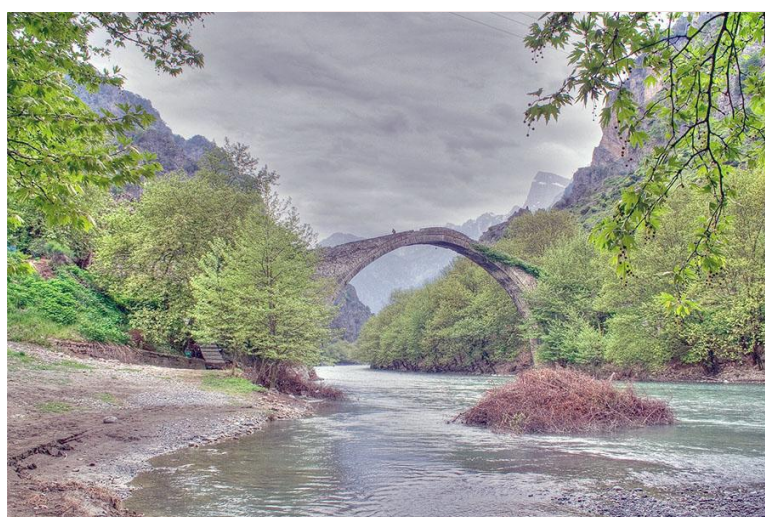
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