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Construction of place-based identities across scales: implications for ecosystem management

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No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Oliver AVRAMOSKI

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the construction of place-based identity at individual and collective levels in the Lake Prespa watershed, shared among Macedonia, Albania and Greece. The research strategy combines ethnography with grounded theory in an iterative mode of data gathering and analysis. The study is based on data collected using ethnographic unstructured in-depth interviews, participant observation, critical reading of popular books on Prespa written by Prespiots, documents and newspaper reports on various events and issues concerning Prespa.

Because place situates the perspective from which people assign meaning to their biophysical and the social environment, they may adopt different positions on an environmental issue in the watershed, depending on the importance of a particular place-based identity. This research demonstrated that meanings ascribed to the biophysical environment are part and parcel of the construction of place-based identities at multiple spatial levels such as the home, village, region, and beyond. The family and the home constitute the core of meanings which individuals assign to elements and processes operating in the biophysical and the social environment at a variety of geographical scales. At larger geographical scales the experience of place is more likely to be mediated by pre-established constructs of place rather than by direct experience. The biophysical environment is involved in the tensions between the dominant constructs of Prespa's identity: an ethnic place, a tourist center, and a place of man and nature.

The implication of the findings of this research is that the proponents of ecosystem-based management in Prespa need to expand their analysis beyond mere technical problems and scientific concerns with ecosystem services provisioning and provide for the extended and authentic participation of stakeholders in order to develop policies that take place-based meanings into account.

Key words: place-based identity, ecosystem management, Prespa, Macedonia Albania, Greece.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASNOM – Antifashistichko Sobranie za Narodno Osloboduvanje na Makedonija (*Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia*)

BNIM – Biographic-Narrative Interview Method

CEU – Central European University

CNN – Cable News Network

DPA – Demokratska Partija na Albancite (*Democratic Party of Albanians*)

EC – European Commission

EU – European Union

GFA – GFA Consulting Group GmbH

Habitats Directive – Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

IMP – Integrated Mediterranean Program

KfW – Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau

LIFE – Financial Instrument for the Environment

MoEPP –Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (of Macedonia)

PIGNP – Public Institution Galicica National Park

REC – Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe

SAP – Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park

SDSM – Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija (*Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia*)

SPP – The Society for the Protecftion of Prespa

USA – United States of America

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO – Unated Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VMRO-DPMNE – Vnatresna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo (*Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation–Democratic party of Macedonian National Unity*)

WWF – World Wide Fund

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

On the occasion of the signing of the *Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area* (EC 2010) the World View show of the USA based Cable News Network (CNN) aired a report on Lake Prespa. Introducing the lake to the international audience as the "highest lake in the Balkans" which is "shared by three countries known for the double-barreled border disputes," Guillermo Arduino, the host of the show, noted that "after heavy pressure from the environmental groups, the nations have set aside political differences to save the shared resources from decades of heavy pollution" (Kanal 5 2011a). What makes Prespa noteworthy internationally was further explained by Stavros Dimas, European Commissioner for the Environment, who told the field reporter of the show that "by protecting the ecosystems, biodiversity and promoting sustainable development we help to create better terms of relations between the peoples of the countries" (Kanal 5 2011a).

The agreement mentioned above was signed by the environment ministers of Albania, Greece and Macedonia, as well as the EU Commissioner for the Environment. The text of this document was, however, authored by many others, including policymakers and environmentalists who presented their views of Lake Prespa and its international importance in the background paragraphs of the agreement as follows (EC 2010):

Prespa Lakes and their surrounding basin are a unique natural area whose geomorphological, ecological, biodiversity and cultural

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significance is of international importance, as a vital habitat for the conservation of numerous rare and/or endemic fauna and flora species, as a nesting place of globally threatened birds, and as a depository of significant archaeological and traditional heritage.

In Macedonia, most national media reported on the event highlighting both the environmental and political dimensions. One of the reports concluded that "in addition to the protection of natural beauties, the whole project has also a political connotation because it is signed in a period when Greece and Macedonia are in the most sensitive phase of the negotiations over the name of the Republic of Macedonia[1] (Kanal 5 2011b).

Arguably, the interest of the local media in Prespa was equally high. In a note posted with the hyperlink for the video report broadcast by CNN, the editor of a local web portal explained that it was a "report for the Prespa region, recently broadcast by the world channel CNN," in which the reporter "reveals *Prespa* to the World" (Prespasky 2011). An environmentally minded visitor to this web portal posted a comment about the video, noting that "it is important that *our voice* is heard so that it would be possible for *them* to understand *our ecological problems* and the importance of *our Lake Prespa* and the wildlife in it" (Prespasky 2011; emphasis added).

The passages above are mere moments in the ongoing, open-ended process by which Prespa is being associated with a set of meanings: a shared resource, an ecosystem ("Prespa Lakes and their surrounding basin"), a unique natural area, an area of natural beauty, a troubled region, and, simply, a place where people live. Some of them are based on media representations; the meanings are produced by

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[1] Greece denounces the right of the Republic of Macedonia to use the word "Macedonia" as the name of the state.

different participants so that even people who have not visited Prespa have some sense of it. Others, rooted in the immediate experience of Prespa, are more intense and emotional and give rise to a sense of place and place identity; Prespa is not *owned* in the same way by everyone, as the last quotation demonstrates forcefully.

As the passages above indicate, there is a multitude of representations of Prespa; likewise, there are different ways of getting to know Prespa. Many of those coming from the scientific community will adhere to what the social anthropologist Ingold calls "the sovereign perspective of abstract reason" (Ingold 2000, p. 15). To continue with Ingold's arguments, a scientific representation or description of Prespa would be attributed to a "disinterested observation and rational analysis" which depends on "a two-step movement of disengagement that cuts out first nature, then culture, as discrete objects of attention" (Ingold 2000, p. 16). For instance, scientists and environmental experts have recently developed the first *Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park* (SAP), which describes the Prespa basin in four chapters: *Abiotic Environment*, *Biotic Environment*, *Anthropogenic Environment*, and *Social Parameters and Trends* (SPP *et al.* 2005). The structure of the SAP generally follows the conceptual framework for ecosystem-based management, which links ecosystem conditions and human well-being. According to this framework, people are integral parts of ecosystems and there is a dynamic interaction between them and other parts of ecosystems (Alcamo and Bennett 2003, Hassan *et al.* 2005). Working within this framework, Pirot *et al.* (2000) concluded that "data collection is an important element of ecosystem management, both in the initial stages to provide a baseline, and during implementation to detect and monitor trends" (p.36). The data gathered should help (a) characterize the system; (b) evaluate

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options for management objectives; and (c) analyze societal factors affecting ecosystem management (Pirot *et al.* 2000, p. 65).

Some scholars, however, find this approach disquieting and unsatisfactory. Four decades ago, the humanistic geographer Edward Relph, in the Preface of his much cited book, *Place and Placelesness,* put his arguments as follows (Relph 1976):

Much of the recent discussion on environmental issues I have found both unsatisfactory and disquieting. Unsatisfactory because the analyses of behavior or of particular problems are so frequently mechanical and abstract, simplifying the world into easily represented structures or models that ignore much of the subtlety and significance of everyday experience. Disquieting because these simplified structures often then serve as the basis for proposals for the design of environments and the manipulation of people and places into patterns that are supposed to be more efficient.

As Relph (2001) argued elsewhere, the experience in specific places is intimate and subjective and the ideas of place precede "all abstractions about location, environment, or geography" (p. 1148). Indeed, Relph's concerns are shared by other humanistic geographers, such as Yi-Fu Tuan, who similarly argued for an "experiential perspective" in exploring "the complex nature of human experience" (Tuan 1977, p. v). For both authors, the concept of place was a central part of their way of thinking about person-environment relationships. This focus on place converged with work outside geography, such as anthropology (Low 1996, Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003) and architecture (Norberg-Schulz 1984), and later influenced many scholars working in environmental psychology (Altman and Low 1992),

environmental sociology (Cheng *et al.* 2003, Manuel-Navarette and Redclift 2010), and philosophy (Casey 1997, Sack 2003).

As Ingold (2000) argued, the rich, subjective knowledge developed through the intimate engagement with a place, for example, the environment of Prespa, cannot be easily expressed in a scientific form. The other side of his argument is that the meaning of scientific information about a place needs to develop within the context of a direct perceptual engagement with its environments (Ingold 2000, p. 21). With these arguments in mind, both academics and practitioners have recently used the concept of place productively as a heuristic device to understand how people make the meaning of the environment as both an ecosystem and a lived place. Using the Prespa lakes' basin as a case-study, this research contributes to these endeavors by focusing specifically on how systems ecology and its applied discipline – ecosystem-based management – can benefit from engaging with what can be called an ecosystem-as-place approach.

1.2.   Introduction to research on place and ecosystem management

Before I begin this section in earnest, I will review briefly the concepts contained in, or implied by, the title. Let us take them in reverse order. Ecosystem management is the applied component of systems ecology (Abel and Stepp 2003). The subject matter of systems ecology has changed over time following the development of the concept of ecosystem (Golley 1993). Yet, according to Pickett and Cadenasso (2002), the basic meaning of the ecosystem concept, as first articulated by Sir Arthur Tansley, is still in use (Tansley 1935, p. 299; emphasis added):

the whole system (in the sense of physics), including not only the organism-complex, but also the whole complex of physical factors forming what we call the environment of the biome—the habitat factors in the widest sense. It is the systems so formed which, from the point of view of the ecologist, are the basic *units of nature on the face of the earth*.

Ecosystems, writes Tansley further (1935, p. 299-230),

are of the most various kinds and sizes.…The whole method of science ... is to isolate systems mentally for the purposes of study.…Actually, the systems we isolate mentally are not only included as parts of larger ones, but they also overlap, interlock and interact with one another.

Recently, Pickett and Cadenasso have suggested that Tansley conceptualized the ecosystem to mean "a biotic community or assemblage and its associated physical environment in a specific *place*" (2002, p. 2; emphasis added). It was this interpretation of the ecosystem concept that Abel and Stepp (2003) used as a central argument in their call for restoring the "interrupted communication" between anthropology and ecology and moving towards "a mature integration of anthropology and the ecosystem sciences in both theory and practice." The concern here is that in both instances *place* is used in the sense of "spatial arena" (Pickett and Cadenasso 2002, p. 2), that is, a location, site, area, and, therefore, could be highly misleading if equated with the *concept* of place.

Then, finally, what is the meaning of the concept of place? As Lang suggested, "the notion of place is most readily explained by borrowing from geography" (1993, p. 261) − not surprisingly, because place is one of the five foundational ontological

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concepts that underpin the discipline of geography, together with space-time, nature, culture, and scale (Howitt and Suchet-Pearson 2003, p. 560). Differently from ecology, however, there is no widely agreed upon definition of place. Nonetheless, for the moment it suffices to say that place, as defined by geographers, is "a system of meaning" and that meaning is grounded in social relations, "constructed within place" and "not projected into" it (Lang 1993, p. 261). Thus, as Lang contends, "place is a psychological or sociological term," it refers to *the environment of somebody*" (p. 261, emphasis added). Although place is a unique spot in the universe, it is not simply an inert 'location,' 'locus,' 'site' – it has agency. Is should also be added that boundaries of places are open, porous, and – analytically and phenomenologically – elastic (Massey 1994, Gieryn 2000, 464). Places nest logically from an armchair, to a continent and the planet (Tuan 1974, Gieryn 2000, Sack 2001).

Comparing the definitions of ecosystem and place, first, both are independent of scale. As Pickett and Cadenasso argue, the ecosystem concept is independent of scale because "an ecosystem can be of any size so long as organisms, physical environment, and interactions can exist within it" (2002, p. 2). Likewise, Sack (2001) argues that both the structure and dynamics of place are scale-independent (p. 113). Furthermore, both the concepts of ecosystem and place refer to "the environment," although in different manners. In the case of ecosystems, the concept, coming from natural science, refers to the "physical environment" of an "organism-complex." In the concept of place, environment refers to, in the first place, people and their activities. Though by no means implied by the ecosystem concept, for a long time ecologists tended to ignore humans and human society as part of ecosystems. By the same token, the concept of place downplayed the role of the physical environment. Since the beginning of 1990s, though, the situation has begun to change.

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Since 1990, in systems ecology the ecosystem concept has gained wide acceptance among researchers and managers as a framework for analyzing and acting on the linkages between people and their environment (Machlis and Force 1997, Alcamo and Bennett 2003). In order to support integrated understanding of "human ecosystems," the basic concept of ecosystem was expanded in ways that allow the human component to play a functional role (Machlis and Force 1997, Pickett *et al.* 1997, Grimm *et al.* 2000, Pickett *et al.* 2001, Luzadis *et al.* 2002). This was achieved not, however, by literally adding humans to ecosystems, but rather, by explicitly incorporating humans into the models of ecologists so that "the substantial and subtle effects of humans are not missed or misinterpreted" (Pickett *et al.* 1997, p. 188). Another consideration has brought together scientists working on common-pool resources, ecological economics, and systems ecology. In this approach, ecological and social systems are simply connected as though they were independent. It uses a model where ecosystems and human social systems − conceived as complex self-organizing systems − are structured in parallel ways to facilitate the analysis of interactions (Costanza and Folke 1996).

Almost in parallel to the 'paradigmatic shift' in ecology, phrases such as "sense of place" and "place attachment" have increasingly been used to characterize "the complex connections people have with the environments they encounter" (Cheng *et al.* 2003, p. 87). There has been a burgeoning of definitions of "sense of place" (a human geography's conception) and "place attachment" (environmental psychology's notion) as consisting of three components: the physical environment, human behavior, and social/psychological processes (Stedman 2003a). Sack (1992) and Butz and Eyles (1997) were among the first to propose a holistic concept of place that explicitly linked the environment and sense of place.

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These developments in systems ecology and human geography are indicative of the ongoing preoccupation of scientists, both in natural and social sciences, with the development of theoretical models and management tools that integrate the environment and society. Both the ecosystem concept and notion of place have been expanded to meet these demands, though starting from opposite directions. For some, this was an opportunity to seek cross-fertilization by borrowing constructs from one discipline and applying them to another or even for integration. More than a decade ago, Williams (1995, p. 7) suggested that ecosystems may be conceived of as "socially constructed places," constructed at "the intersection of natural forces, social and economic relations and sociocultural meanings" and "organized in a hierarchy of scales." Ecosystem management, he added, "must map the full range of meanings that humans assign to places" (Williams 1995, p. 9). At almost the same time, Machlis and Force proposed their "human ecosystem" model, and argued that, "in the context of ecosystem management (with its emphasis on landscape), *communities of place* with specific geographic boundaries" are appropriate "spatial scales for understanding human activities" (Force and Machlis 1997, emphasis added). Human communities, they added, "just as plant and animal communities in forest ecosystems, are fine-scale ecosystems."

Fueled by the initial enthusiasm over the use of the notion of place in ecosystem management, Williams and Stewart (1998) asserted that sense of place is beginning to "find a home" in ecosystem (i.e., forest) management. While this optimism proved to be premature (Stedman 2003b), the idea was gaining acceptance among researchers and gradually evolved into a distinct research stream (hereinafter referred to as the "*ecosystem-as-place*" research/perspective). Working within this framework, Eisenhauer *et al.* (2000) conducted a community mapping exercise and

statistical analysis of open-ended survey responses (n=434) to explore the types of activities people do at special places and reveal the importance of recreational activities in people's connections with special places in southern Utah, USA. Based on their study they concluded that "specific environmental features, a history of significant social interactions, and convenience factors associated with activities at a place suggest that users of a locale may have a sense of place that is important for managers to recognize and address" (Eisenhauer *et al.* 2000, p. 438). More importantly, they argued, these emotional attachments to places may be the dominant reason why places are considered special. In other words, they asserted, their study lends further support for the argument that ecosystem management needs to go beyond the "commodity metaphor" of ecosystem stocks and services (utilitarian values) and recognize that ecosystems and places have intrinsic values worthy of protection that are independent of human use.

This effort was paralleled and complemented by a trend in research using the concept of sense of place within the theoretical framework of social psychology, environmental psychology, and later, conservation psychology. Following the perspective that gives prominence to the "human dimension of ecosystem management," Cantrill and Senecah (2001) argued that is important to understand "how people construct their sense of self-in-place in a region" and to acknowledge that "the perception of place is at least partially rooted in the ground of social and economic ties to a location" (p. 198).

Another contribution to this research strand comes from Cheng *et al.* (2003). In their recent review of theoretical writings and empirical research on "community-based collaborative partnerships," these authors concluded that place is a central

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concept for characterizing the complex connections between people and places in a natural resource management context. Drawing on their observation that "group identity has been recognized a key behavioral influence in empirical research in human geography and environmental psychology" (Cheng *et al.* 2003, p. 89), they propose that place – through the links to self-identity and social-group identity – is a crucial determinant of behavior (see below, Proposition 1). Consequently, natural resource politics is as much a contest over the meanings of places as it is a competition over the allocation and distribution of scarce resources among interest groups (Cheng *et al.* 2003, p. 98). Based on their findings, they suggested six propositions for a systematic analysis of the complex relationships between people, places, and politics:

Proposition 1: People's perceptions and evaluations of the environment are expressions of place-based self-identity.

Proposition 2: People perceive and evaluate the environment as different places rather than an assemblage of individual biophysical attributes.

Proposition 3: Social groups that seemingly emerge around using, protecting, or altering the physical attributes of a location may be engaging in more fundamental processes of defining significant social and cultural meanings of that place.

Proposition 4: People's evaluations of, and responses to, natural resource management proposals are influenced by their identification with social groups organized around particular meanings of the places involved.

Proposition 5: Groups intentionally manipulate the meanings of places hoping to influence the outcome of natural resource controversies.

Proposition 6: The geographic scale of a place can change people's perceived group identifications and therefore influence the outcomes of a natural resource controversy.

However, as Stedman recently (2003b) observed, despite the calls for integrating the concept of sense of place into the management of natural resources, the contribution of the concept to the practice of resource management has been minimal. The reason is, argues Stedman, the 'schism' between the rich theory on place and the inability of quantitative research approaches to reflect that richness. To bridge this gap, he argues, we need better models that can allow for formulating testable hypotheses concerning the relationships between concepts. An important task of such a project is, he argues, to understand the ways the physical environment contributes to the development of sense of place (Stedman 2003a, 2003b).

1.3. *Statement of the research problem*

This research draws on the ongoing theoretical and empirical endeavor that seeks to integrate the concept of place into the theory and practice of ecosystem management (Williams 1995, Williams and Patterson 1996, Williams and Stewart 1998, Cantrill 1998, Eisenhauer *et al.* 2000, Cantrill and Senecah 2001, Hurley *et al.* 2002, Kaltenborn and Williams 2002, Woolley *et al.* 2002, Cheng and Daniels 2003, Cheng *et al.* 2003, Stedman 2003a, Stedman 2003b, Clark and Stein 2003, Cheng and Daniels 2005). It can be broadly characterized as a "socio-cultural approach" to human-environment interactions which is concerned with "how meaning both

structures and is structured by the environment" as well as how the "macroscale sociocultural and economic factors" are linked with "more social- and individual-level environmental concerns" (Williams and Patterson 1996, p. 512). Most of the previous research has been focused on the development of a sense of place at the local scale, such as community-level places (Cheng *et al.* 2003) or "locales regarded as special places" (Eisenhauer *et al.* 2000), even if the geographical scope of study was wider (e.g., a watershed). The observations about attachment to places of other scales and how they are transformed across scales – for instance, moving from local to regional – have been scarce and not systematic (Cuba and Hummon 1993, Heath 1993). Nevertheless, the importance of the scale issue has been recognized and there are already some attempts to address it both at the theoretical and practical level. For instance, Cheng *et al.* (2003) argued that "natural resource policy debates span a continuum from the global scale…to local scales," and that at each geographic scale "there are different possible groups with which an individual may identify" (p. 98).

In my view, the scale issue in the context of place-ecosystem integration can be approached from another perspective. I propose to begin with the following question: *How does the nested hierarchy[2] of ecosystems relate to places of different scales?* Focusing for a moment on the case of watershed management – the most prevalent form of ecosystem management, a watershed is a geographic area within which all water drains toward a common point. It is possible to define a nearly infinitive number of sub-watersheds, but usually there are five basic units: catchment, sub-watershed, watershed, sub-basin, and basin (Reimold 1998). As watersheds often encompass large geographic areas they may include ecosystems of various types and cross different political or administrative boundaries. In practice, although watershed

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[2] "In a nested hierarchy, the higher levels are com-posed of and contain the lower levels" (O'Neil *et al.* 1986).

management institutions operate at the regional level (a watershed, a landscape, a bioregion, etc.), commonly there are subsidiary institutional arrangements that promote, "sub-watershed," "micro-watershed," and "community-level" action. In summary, ecosystem management presumes a hierarchical nesting of ecosystems, from a catchment of few square kilometers in size to watersheds as a country (e.g., the watershed area of the Great Lakes is the size of France). Although there is recognition of the need for policies that respect local circumstances, often there is a call for collective action across large geographic areas that may include not only different ecosystems, but also different cultures and different "places." The question often arises of how to motivate communities dependent on forest ecosystems to change their practices in order to protect, at times rather distant, lake ecosystems. For example, in summarizing the lessons learned from watershed management in California, Cheng *et al.* (2005) note that:

> Large-scale watershed planning efforts tend to alienate stakeholders
> from one another and from the watershed itself, leading to the creation of
> smaller-scale sub-basin groups to address issues that are more tangible
> and comprehensible to the stakeholders (p. 31).

In view of the arguments presented above, the following question arises: *How do place-based identities help or hamper ecosystem management?*

As discussed in the previous section, places nest, similarly to ecosystems, from the local to the global scale, but there is little empirical research about how scale influences the processes by which places emerge at different scales. In a recent paper, Stedman (2003b, p. 824) identified research priorities to bring coherence to current theory on a sense of place and noted the following:

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place is a multidimensional concept that depends on meanings, which in turn are based on experiences with both the physical landscape and social actors therein. Variability in meanings among individuals or groups arises from variability in experience with the landscape.

Thus, the question above may be broken down into several more specific questions: How do experiences with the biophysical environment contribute to the construction of places of different scales? How do experiences with the biophysical environment relate to experiences with social actors and how does this relation depend on the scale of places?

Almost four decades ago Tuan (1975) proposed a cognitive theory of the construction of place which answers some of these questions. Tuan (1975) argued that place "is a center of meaning constructed by experience" (p. 152), and that "experience constructs place at different scales" (p. 153). Experience constructs places with the contribution of all of the five senses – seeing, smelling, feeling, hearing, and tasting (Tuan, 1977, 18). As places are sensed, senses are placed (Feld 1996, 91), at a variety of scales, from an armchair to the global level. However, this experience also needs to be meaningful. When fused with prominent elements of personal and ethnic identity, the social and moral force of the sense of place may reach sacramental proportions (Basso 1996, 87). From a social constructivist's point of view, Tuan argues that: "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place when we endow it with value" (1977, 6). Tuan (1975) considered six different scales to examine how experience transforms "undifferentiated space": within the home, the home itself, the neighborhood, the city, the region, and the nation-state. At the first two scales, argued Tuan, direct sensory experiences play a major role in the construction of places (1975). These levels places have primarily a perceptual

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character and strong meaning. Moving beyond the scale of home in Tuan's hierarchy, experience plays a less and less important role; the constructions of places at higher levels rely increasingly on indirect intellectual experience. These places are conceptual in character rather than perceptual and tend to have weaker meanings. Regardless of the scale, according to Tuan, meanings attached to places are primarily socially constructed.

On the other hand, drawing on their empirical study, Eisenhauer *et al.* (2000) assert the existence of a reciprocal relationship between places in nature and social interactions and that many of the differences in meaning attached to different places can be attributed to the differences in the physical environment, not only social-cultural differences. The differences in the emphasis on the role of the physical environment in the development of a sense of place mirrors the long-standing debate over the importance of the social versus the material context in directing human action. Ingold (1996) observed that some authors, drawing on Gibsonian ecological psychology, "adopt a view of the environment as a palpably physical presence, whose properties become perceptually significant in terms of what they afford for the different kinds of beings that inhabit it" (p. 183). Others, he adds, "adopting an ethnomethodological approach, emphasize the embeddedness of every human being within an environment that consists, *in the first place*, of other people and their activities" (Ingold 1996, 183, emphasis added). That is, for the second camp, meaning is constituted within the realm of what is broadly called discourse. However, as Ingold (1996) has convincingly argued, we cannot describe the environment (the context of action) of a person and the "affordances" it offers by describing it as *material* or *social* and arguing for prioritization of one over the other (p. 187). This does not dismiss Stedman's (2003b) assertion that little is known of how the

biophysical environment contributes to the construction of the sense of place. Moreover, we still understand little of how scale influences the construction of a sense of place at different scales (Cuba and Hummon 1993, Heath 1993). Thus, the initial question can now be made more specific and submitted as the *central research question* of this research:

How does the biophysical environment relate to the construction of place-based identities across scales? What are the implications for ecosystem management?

The emphasis on place-based identity follows Harvey (1996), who suggested that: "territorial place-based identity, particularly when conflated with race, ethnic, gender, religious, and class differentiation, is one of the most pervasive bases for both progressive political mobilizations…as well as for reactionary exclusionary politics" (p. 209). Place-based identity, therefore, is a sort of extreme type of "sense of place" that will, for the purposes of this research, sharpen the focus and enhance the prospects for generalizations from empirical data.

Following Wengraf (2001), it is useful to break down the 'central research question' into the following more specific research questions:

- *How does the biophysical environment relate to gender, ethnic and religious differentiations in the construction of place-based identities?*

- *How does this relationship change from local to regional scale?*

- *How are place-based identities of different scales linked with each other and how does this influence the relationships between the biophysical environment and ethnic and religious differentiations?*

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- *What are the implications for ecosystem management in terms of the perception of environmental problems and the emergence of collective action for the protection of ecosystems of different scales?*

Following Wengraf (2001), the research questions will be clarified by explicating the theoretical framework of this research project. The following chapter links the theoretical concepts to possible empirical indicators, a process that might be called "instrumentation" or "interpretation" (in inductive approaches), but also "operationalization" (in deductive approaches).

1.4. Overview of chapters

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. This chapter argues that the theory underpinning ecosystem-based management can benefit from what can be called ecosystem-as-place research. Drawing on the previous work in this research stream this chapter has identified the research problem and set out the central research question of this dissertation: *How does the biophysical environment contribute to the construction of place-based identities across scales? What are the implications for ecosystem management?* The following paragraphs give a brief overview of the remaining chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework for the research and discusses in some detail various concepts of place and the related concepts of place identity and scale. It ends with a presentation of a set of theoretical propositions which synthesize the concepts of place, place identity, and scale and how the connections between them can be examined systematically.

Chapter 3 explains the research strategy combining ethnography and grounded theory and presents the methods used in this study. The collection of empirical data combined unstructured in-depth interviews with participant observation notes and a reading of general books on Prespa, written by Prespiots, as well as newspaper reports on various events and issues concerning Prespa. The interview protocols implied that (i) there is conjunction between self-identity and place; (ii) the conjunction between self-identity and place is salient both at the scale of the home (neighborhood) and the region (the Prespa basin); and (iii) Prespiots can convey their sense of self and meanings of place through narratives of personal experience. Chapter 3 also presents a detailed description of the Prespa basin as a case-study.

Chapter 4 discusses the data collected during the first stage of the research. The body of data consists mainly of transcripts of ethnographic interviews and partly of participant observation notes. The analysis, following grounded theory, focuses on major themes in participants' talk with the aim of identifying the basic social and psychological processes in the data. Four major themes emerged in participants' recollections of personal experience in place: (i) family; (ii) occupation (work); (iii) community; and (iv) the biophysical environment. Three basic social-psychological processes by which participants make meaning of place emerged from the themes: (i) mapping the self through the family, (ii) matching the self and place, and (iii) reconfiguring the self and place. The latter process emerged as the central theoretical category in this research because it is central to understanding person-place relationships. The central category integrated the other categories which emerged from the data into a preliminary theoretical framework which complements the relational framework proposed by Robert D. Sack (1997).

Through theoretical sampling, the second stage of the research facilitated recollections of participants' experience and sense of place at the scale of the Prespa basin. A reading of 5 popular books on Prespa and a number of newspaper reports complemented the interview data (5 transcripts). Chapter 5 discusses the data, specifically addressing the issue of scale in person-place relationships. Three major themes were identified in the construction of Prespa-based collective identity: "Prespa as an ethnic place," "Prespa as an international tourist destination," and "Prespa as a place of man and nature." The three constructs reveal that Prespiots have different interests in Prespa, encapsulated within power relations extending beyond the region. Taking into account these findings, but also following the established canons of generalizability and trustworthiness in qualitative research, this chapter then refines the preliminary theoretical framework and its theoretical categories.

The proposed theoretical framework, assuming it is supported by further research, carries a number of significant implications regarding the role of place in ecosystem management. Chapter 6 argues that in the contemporary conceptual frameworks underpinning ecosystem-based management, the concept of use-value of ecosystem services is central to explaining the relationship between ecosystems and human well-being. However, as this research showed, experience and meanings attached to the biophysical environment are part and parcel of the construction of place-based identities across geographical scales. As a consequence, people's perceptions and evaluations of ecosystems and their services are not based solely on utility criteria, but also depend on meanings arising in everyday experience and interactions with place. Theoreticians and practitioners of ecosystem-based management need to better comprehend the processes that contribute to the construction of place-based identity and how they influence the outcomes of

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management actions beyond the provisioning of ecosystem services (e.g., provisioning, regulating, and cultural services). The proponents of ecosystem-based management need to expand their analysis beyond mere technical problems and scientific concerns in ecosystem services provisioning and develop research programs and procedures for ecosystem management planning that take place-based meanings into account.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses the concept of place and, in more detail, how it is used to explain the conjunction between self-identity and place. It also attends to conceptualizations of scale, which is particularly relevant for the ecosystem-as-place perspective.

There are forests of literature on place, and place and identity, which are inextricably intertwined with each other. It would be difficult to summarize them all here and, therefore, this chapter can do little more than cut one narrow path. This will, nonetheless, serve well the purpose of this section, which is to link the research questions to possible empirical indicators.

2.1. *The concept of place*

Place is a concept that is widely used in everyday life and has become part of common sense. However, as Aristotle declared long ago in his *Physics*, "the question, what is place? presents many difficulties" (Hope 1961, p. 58). Aristotle concluded that place refers to the precise dimensions of the space which contains something. Aristotle's interpretation of the notion of place as a neutral container underpins the old idea of place as "whatever occupies a location," which has endured throughout the long history of the discipline of geography and other scientific disciplines (Relph 1996, p. 907). According to Relph, the difficult question about the nature of place was considered unnecessary to elaborate upon for almost two millennia, until the 1960s, when more complex interpretations of place has begun to emerge simultaneously in

geography and other academic fields (1996, p. 906; 2001, p. 11448). This happened because, as Urry (1995) argued, "places are not clear and obvious entities" and for the reason that "the understanding of place cannot be undertaken without major theoretical endeavor (p. 1).

The concept of place has long been marginalized in the social sciences (Agnew 1987, p. 2, Johnston 1996, p. 1049). Until the 1980s, the discourses of modern social science were dominated by the concepts of community and class, leaving little room for a concept of place (Agnew 1987, p. 9). Moreover, there was widespread confusion of the concepts of community and place defining place in terms of a physical setting for social relations, that is, as an attribute of communal association (Agnew 1987, p. 16). As the British sociologist John Urry argued later, although the major social and cultural theories engage with the concept of place, this has been done in an unsatisfactory way for the reason that social theorists did not know what to do about time, space, and nature (1995, p.1). A major impetus for an adequate incorporation of place within social theory was given by Anthony Giddens' emphasis on space (and time) in his theory of structuration. In one of his major works on structuration, Giddens (1979, p. 54) wrote:

> I regard it as a fundamental theme of this paper, and of the whole of this
> book, that social theory must acknowledge, as it has not done previously,
> time-space intersections as essentially involved in all social existence.

Rather than treating time and space as containers for experiential events or an "environment" within which social life is enacted, Giddens thinks these terms are essentially constitutive features of the social world (1979, p. 202). This is achieved by fundamentally reconceiving both terms. In developing the theory of structuration he

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introduces two notions that are of relevance here: the concepts of 'locale' and of "regionalization" (Giddens 1984, p. 118).

Geographers, more than other groups of scholars, have considered the concepts of place central to their discipline. Thus, this section, for the most part, concerns their arguments. The revival of interest in the concept of place can be traced back in the 1970s in a stream of thought in geography labeled "humanistic geography," which emerged as a reaction against the positivist philosophy of the spatial science of the 1960s (Agnew *et al.* 1996). The most original and coherent contribution from this scholarly stream came from the Chinese-American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (Agnew *et al.* 1996, Peet 1998). In his *Space and Place: A Humanistic Perspective* (1974) he identifies two meanings of place: (i) spirit and personality, and (ii) a sense of place. Sacred places have a 'spirit,' in a literal sense, because the people believe spirits dwell in them. Places have personality because they acquire unique signatures in the course of time. The uniqueness of places is a result of a combination of natural endowments and the modifications shaped by successive generations of humans. Places that have personality, such as monumental art or holy places, command awe; they have high "imageability" and yield their meaning to the eye (Tuan 1974, p. 447). He names this type of place "public symbols". A sense of place arises only after person's prolonged experience of a place. He uses the phrase "fields of care" for those places that yield a sense of place. Unlike public symbols, fields of care lack visual identity; "they can be known in essence only from within" (Tuan 1974, p. 451). Most places are both public symbols and fields of care in varying degrees. People, argued Tuan, establish fields of care in a physical setting by establishing emotional bonds to their material environment and by developing a consciousness of its identity and spatial limits. Affective bonds are established

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through repeated experiences in the course of the day-to-day contact: "the functional pattern of our lives is capable of establishing a sense of place" (Tuan 1974, p. 452). Place is not fixed to any scale – experience constructs place at different scales, from the room to the nation-state and beyond – to the whole earth (Tuan 1974, 1977). Also, communities construct shared meanings and images associated with place at a variety of geographical scales from the local neighborhood up to the nation-state.

During the 1980s the interest in the concept of place attracted the attention of economic geographers such as Doreen Massey and Linda McDowell, among others, who were interested in gender issues as they relate to the experience of place. According to McDowell and Massey (1984), place is the geographical manifestation of general processes producing economic restructuring which combines the existing with historically constituted conditions (p. 460). As Peet (1998, p. 289) has noted, Massey "relates spatiality to the social and to power" in a way that spatial organization (spatiality) becomes integral to the production of the social. According to Massey (1994, p. 154), place (locality) can be conceived as:

> … articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent.

Thus, places are construed by the social interactions which they tie together at all scales. These interactions themselves are not static; places are not bounded sites of authenticity, singular, fixed, and unproblematic in their identities. Instead, places should be thought of as processes. While in some cases scientists may draw

boundaries around places for certain types of studies, this is not necessary for the conceptualization of a place itself. There is an interplay between the general forces and the unique circumstances of places. The uniqueness of a place is a product of its position in relation to wider forces, but its character also engraves its own imprint on those wider processes. In addition, the effect of places on the wider economy and society depends not only on the character of individual places, but also on the nature and degree of the differences and interdependencies between them.

The insights made by Tuan and Massey have been taken further by Agnew, who developed a theoretical framework for political sociology in which place is central. According to Agnew (1987), the concept of place consists of three definitional elements grounded in the theory of structuration: (i) locale; (ii) location; and (iii) sense of place. Place is "locale" in the sense of the settings in which social relations are constituted; it can be informal or institutional. "Locale" describes the objective dimensions of local social arrangements. "Location" is the geographical area encompassing the settings for social interaction that are shaped and defined by social and economic processes that operate at a wider scale. It refers to the impact of processes at large scales, e.g., a state or the world-economy in a single place – one among many. The "sense of place" refers to the "local structure of feeling." The "sense of place" describes the subjective dimensions of local social arrangements. In other words, place "refers to discrete if 'clastic' areas in which settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identify" (Agnew 1987, p. 28). For example, home, work, school, and church are nodes around which everyday human activities circulate, which, glued into a cluster, can create a sense of place, both geographically and socially. When places are similar in the three aspects, interconnected and contiguous, one can refer to a "region" of places (Agnew

1987, p. 28). In such a situation the sense of place can be projected onto the region or a nation and give rise to regionalism or nationalism. Hence, Agnew notes, not only "locality" can give rise to a sense of place (1987, p. 28). While the focus on locale may imply synonymy between place and locality, the incorporation of location implicates processes at other scales. According to Agnew, this is because "the local social worlds of place (locale) cannot be understood apart from the objective macro-order of location and the subjective territorial identity of sense of place" (1987, p. 28). Drawing on this concept of place, Agnew explains that political behavior can best be explained contextually, as "the product of agency as structured by the historically constituted social contexts in which people live their lives – in a word, places" (Agnew 1987, p. 43). In other words, political order is produced and reproduced through microsociological routines (locale and the sense of place) that are influenced by the location (macro-order).

While recognizing the contributions of Agnew and other scholars who follow the "socio-cultural" turn in reconceptualizing place, Butz and Eyles (1997) proposed a different concept of "sense of place," taking into account Habermas' (1984a, 1984b) theory of communicative action and Ingold's (2000) approach to environmental perception. Butz and Eyles (1997) developed a concept of the "sense of place" that comprises three components: social, ideological, and ecological. At the core of their approach is Eyles' conceptualization of community as consisting of three aspects – place, people and mind – standing for "community as ecological structure, social structure and ideological structure respectively" (Eyles 1985, p. 63). They also draw on Habermas' (1984b) theory of communicative action and his conceptualization of the relationship between communicative action, instrumental action, and "life world." Finally, they draw on Ingold's approach to environmental perception, which is, in

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turn, based on James Gibson's "ecological psychology" (1986). According to Gibson, perception of oneself and one's environment are inseparable. The world is perceived directly and the *affordances* are the information that constitutes perception: "the affordances of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill" (Gibson 1986, p. 127). Gibson (1986) illustrated his approach with the following examples: "the act of throwing complements the perception of a throwable object. The transporting of things is part and parcel of seeing them as portable or not" (p. 235). Ingold (2000) took this idea further and argued that individuals not only perceive affordances directly, but also share them due to the fact they pursue activities jointly in a shared environment (p. 167).

Drawing on these theoretical insights, Butz and Eyles make six points that further clarify their "ecological conceptualization" of the sense of place. First, "ecological senses of place are emplaced aspects of 'life world'" (1997, p. 10). Second, perception of ecological affordances is shared by members of a speech community; the instrumental requirements of social life make them shared. This is how they become "a basis for commonality in the life worlds of participants, which help make some of their validity claims recognizable and tangible to one another" (Butz and Eyles 1997, p. 10). Third, the relationship between the ecological setting and social interaction also works in the opposite direction: "ecological senses of place are as much social and mental constructs as they are product of a physical ecological setting" (Butz and Eyles 1997, p. 10). Fourth, ecological senses of place are materially constituted through the utilization and manipulation of ecological objects and the production of new environments. Fifth, ecological senses of place are never purely individual or purely collective. It follows, then, that ecological senses of place are not stable but always becoming. Also, they are not unitary because "individuals

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encounter an ecological setting from multiple subject positions, and in the context of multiple, perhaps conflicting, practical purposes" (Butz and Eyles 1997, p. 11). Finally, to the extent that ecological senses of place derive from persons' practically grounded encounters with specific ecological objects, they are "particular types of attitudes toward particular types of places" (Butz and Eyles 1997, p. 11). It follows, then, that not all senses of place are ecologically grounded and that stable ecological senses of place are likely to emerge in:

> … groups whose interaction with a place is rooted in numerous and ongoing ecological encounters, contextualized by a variety of everyday practical purposes, in a social setting characterized by sustained communicative action regarding the symbolic and instrumental use value of the ecological characteristics of the place.

2.2. *Place and identity: A sense of place*

According to Tuan (1977), the identity of a place is constructed by formal and informal means; it becomes visible through competition and in conflict with other places, visual prominence, the evocative power of art, architecture, ceremonials and rites, etc. "Identity of place is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life" (Tuan 1977, p 178). For Massey, in contrast with Yi-Fu Tuan, the identity of places is not defined through competition and conflict, but through interconnections with other places (Massey 1994, p. 5). Importantly, as she notes, "all attempts to institute horizons, to establish boundaries, to secure the identity of places" must be seen only as "attempts to stabilize the meaning of particular envelopes of space-time" (Massey 1994, p. 5). Another important clarification of Massey's concept of place concerns its conflation with

community. As she eloquently explains, "communities can exist without being in the same place – from networks of friends with like interests, to major religious, ethnic or political communities" (Massey 1994, p. 153). Also, places seldom accommodate single communities in the sense of coherent social groups. Or, if they do, it does not imply the existence of a single sense of place, for people occupy different positions within any community. This issue leads to the problem of the linkages between identity and place. The identities of individuals, explains Massey, are construed of place, class as well as a whole complex of other things, particularly race and gender. The balance between these constituents in any one instance or any one period of time may vary. Place identities are always unfixed, contested, and multiple, the product of the specificities of mixes of links and connections. The same is true for places. Seen from this perspective, places are "open and porous" (Massey 1994, p. 5).

Rose (2002) identified three ways in which place and identity are bound into the notion of a sense of place. The first is to think of identity as connected to a particular place by a feeling of belonging. Strong feelings about identity with a place can focus on different kinds of places, at a range of different scales. Thus, a sense of belonging to a place may occur at the household level, the local level (a village, a town), the regional scale (landscape), or the national level (national identity), but also at the supranational level (e.g., Europe as a place), and the global level. Senses of place, however, may combine these different geographical scales. The second way by which identity and place are connected is through identifying against a place. As Rose puts it, "identity and place are not only articulated positively as a list of elements with which to identify: they are also structured in relation to perceptions of other groups and places as different" (2002, 96). Finally, identity and a particular place may have little relation to each other; place may be felt to be irrelevant to identity.

In order to explain how different meanings of place or different senses of place arise, geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists, among others, have used different sets of arguments (Rose 2002). One of these, described by Rose as a "cultural explanation for sense of place," rests on the assumption that a sense of place is part of the systems of meaning through which people make sense of the world. A sense of place is a part of people's cultural interpretation of the world that surrounds them. Following this line of argument, some authors have argued that the awareness of cultural differences may encourage a sense of place to develop. Therefore, a sense of place can be a way of establishing a difference between one group and another (Rose 2002, 99). One way of establishing such a difference (a social difference) is by "drawing" spatial boundaries. Thus, because a sense of place can focus on a range of different scales, boundaries between places can be established at different scales. Setting a boundary has two functions: (a) to establish insiders – those who belong to that place; but also (b) to establish outsiders – those who do not belong. Another important issue in the cultural explanation for senses of place is that of power relations; that is "the relationship between social inequality and sense of place" (Rose 2000, p. 99). Some senses of place are more powerful in a particular situation, easier to express, and positive in contrast to others. Or in other words, senses of place can be seen as "a result of underlying structures of power such as colonialism and imperialism" (Rose 2002, 100). Territoriality also can be seen as related to power relations and subsequently to senses of place.

Linked to power relations and how they structure senses of place is also the notion of uneven development or economic reconstructing under capitalism. Economic reconstructing, that is, the need to attract multinational corporations, may render some sense of place dominant so that it can obscure other, perhaps more

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important, understandings about that same place (Rose 2002, 100). On the other hand, explains Rose, the preoccupation with power relations in the cultural explanation for senses of place has neglected the importance of personal feelings and emotions. The emotional dynamics involved in the intersection of identity with senses of place can be explored by looking at the politics of identity, that is, the construction of "Other". As Rose argues, "the notion of Other allows us to connect senses of place, power and identity in an analytical manner which does not neglect the emotional dynamics of place" (2002, 104).

The concept of "place identity," along with "place attachment," and "place dependence," has also been used in environmental psychology (Manuel-Navarette and Redclift 2010, p. 337). Several decades ago Proshansky (1978) noted that place identity refers to "those dimensions of the self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, beliefs, preferences, feelings, values, goals and behavioral tendencies and skills relevant to this environment" (p. 155). Recently Horwitz *et al.* (2001) have provided new empirical evidence on the links between a sense of place, identity, and the features of the biophysical environment. They argue that biodiversity, the endemic features in particular, of any place (ecosystem), can give rise to a person's attachment to that place and therefore become part of a person's identity (2001, p. 254). For them, a sense of place results from the "interplay among the physical attributes of an area, people's conceptions and interpretations, and their actions and activities within the physical setting." Drawing on the literature in environmental psychology, Horwitz *et al.* (2001) distinguish between "individual place identity" (a sense of place at the individual level) and "community place attachment." These authors see the concepts of a sense of place and place identity as

frameworks that can be used in ecosystem management by emphasizing the relationship between ecological, social, and psychological health and well-being (Horwitz *et al.* 2001, p. 259).

2.3. *Place, scale, and ecosystem management*

The issue of scale is fundamental to both human geography and systems ecology. However, as mentioned above, in systems ecology there is often confusion over the use of the concept of place and scale. This can be demonstrated by examining the use of these concepts in the much – cited report *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment* (Alcamo and Bennett 2003), authored by over 1300 scientists from nearly 100 nations, and prepared under the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (MEA) project which was initiated by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. The authors of this report suggest that any geographical area can be conceptualized as a nested hierarchy of places and place-related processes (Alcamo and Bennett 2003, p. 118). Successful ecosystem management, they argue, relies on integrated understandings of ecosystems and human society which are "nearly always place-based" (Alcamo and Bennett 2003, p. 111). However, as discussed above, this interpretation of the notion of place as a container (of things) has been seriously criticized by humanistic geographers.

Alcamo and Bennett (2003) define the term "scale" to mean "the physical dimensions, in either space or time, of phenomena or observations;" it can be expressed in physical units, such as meters or years (p. 108). It is also important to note that these authors insist on keeping a clear distinction between the "scale of observation" and the "scale of the phenomenon." The scale of observation is "a *construct* based on human systems of measurement" and has three components: extent

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(or duration), resolution, and grain (Alcamo and Bennett 2003, p. 108; emphasis added). The "scale of the phenomenon," on the other hand, is the "characteristic scale" at which ecological and human processes occur. The "characteristic scale" of a process describes the typical extent or duration over which the process has its impact. The characteristic spatial and temporal scales of a process define its "scale domain." Another important distinction emphasized in the report is that between scale and "level." According to these authors, the word "level" is used to describe "the discrete levels of social organization," such as individuals, households, communities, or nations (Alcamo and Bennett 2003). These levels of social organization correspond broadly to particular scale domains in time and space. While the level of organization is not a scale, Alcamo and Bennett (2003) argue, it can have a scale.

This approach to conceptualizing scale has been criticized by human geographers for a number of reasons. For instance, the human geographer, David Harvey, warns that physical, biological, and social processes do not operate in, or "occur at…characteristic scale," but, instead, "actively construct space and time and in so doing define distinctive scales for their development," which is to say that scale is not an ontologically given category – it is *produced* (1996, p. 53). The implication of this argument is that there are no basic scales at which all processes can be examined. It also means that there is no preordained and hierarchically ordered system placed over existing space, from local to global (Marston 2000, p. 220). Moreover, as Harvey (1996) noted, throughout history "the temporal and spatial scales at which humans operate as ecological agents have also been changing" (p. 203).

Marston (2000) has identified three central tenets of the contemporary understanding of "scale production" in human geography. First, the differentiation of geographical scales is constituted and reconstituted through the geographical structure of social interactions. Second, the differentiation of geographical scales has material consequences. The third tenet is that scale construction is a political process common to capitalism. According to Marston, scale is "a relational element in a complex *mix that also includes space, place and environment*" (2000, 221, emphasis added).

2.4.   *Conclusions*

In keeping with the approach used by Cheng *et al.* (2003), this chapter concludes with six theoretical propositions which (i) synthesize the key ideas introduced and discussed in this chapter, and (ii) provide guidance as to how the connections between them can be examined systematically. The propositions presented below draw substantially on the theoretical work of Agnew (1987), Butz and Eyles (1997), Low and Lawrence – Zuniga (2003), and Cheng *et al.* (2003).

Proposition 1: Place can be conceptualized as consisting of three constitutive elements:

- Settings in which social relations are constituted (locale);

- The geographic area encompassing the settings for social interaction (location);

- A sense of place – part of a cultural system of meaning associated with a place (Agnew 1987).

Proposition 2: Places are continuously re-constructed at all scales through the interactions of the three constitutive elements. The three elements are mutually constitutive and cannot be understood apart from each other nor can one be reduced to an expression of another.

Proposition 3: People's perceptions and evaluations of the environment entail the recognition and cultural elaboration of directly perceived properties of environments in mutually constituting ways through narratives and praxis (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003, p. 14).

Proposition 4: People perceive and evaluate the environment as different places rather than an assemblage of individual biophysical attributes (Cheng *et al.* 2003).

Proposition 5: People's perceptions and evaluations of the environment are expressions of place-based self-identity (Cheng *et al.* 2003).

Proposition 6: Place-based identity, particularly when conflated with race, ethnic, gender, religious, and class differentiation, is one of the most pervasive bases for both progressive political mobilizations and reactionary exclusionary politics (Agnew 1987).

Propositions 1 and 2 stress that the three components of *place* are inextricably interrelated. Because of methodological difficulties – which is understandable – most current research focuses on a sense of place almost in isolation from the other two components. The research strategy adopted in this study has the potential for keeping the three components 'bundled' both during data collection and analysis. Propositions 3 and 4 explicate the linkages between place and ecosystem with an emphasis on the relationships between perception and culture. In turn, proposition 5 links all the

previous propositions to self-identity. Proposition 6 establishes a relationship between culture (gender, race, ethnicity, religion) and the environment through the concept of place-based identity.

These propositions are not meant to be all-inclusive in terms of the state of the art of the theory of place. They do, however, mark the terrain to be explored and provide methodological guidance for the purposes of this study.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1.   Research strategy

According to Morse (1998) qualitative research design is determined by the nature of the research questions, the purpose of the study, and the skills and resources available to the researcher. In this proposal the nature of the research question is overwhelmingly determined by the 'nature' of 'place'. And the nature of place has been articulated in both objectivist and subjectivist terms. Hence, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used. Practitioners need predictive models useful to management (Stedman 2003b) as well as pure research. To meet their demands, argued Stedman (2003b), researchers should devise quantitative studies of place capable of measuring the "complexity of the questions place theorists long have been asking." Meeting these demands, however, might be not an easy task for, as Kruger and Shannon (2000) have argued, "the process of conceiving life as variables to be counted tends to oversimplify complex relations and inhibit our understanding of these relations" (p. 462).

For the purposes of this study, I submit, a qualitative approach is more appropriate than a quantitative approach. A qualitative research design has the advantage of making new insights in how the biophysical environment contributes to the construction of places of different scales without downgrading the 'richness' of the concept of place. The approach of this study is in agreement with Kruger and Shannon (2000), who argued that we cannot set off "counting and measuring before we truly understand underlying meanings that would help identify what we should be counting or measuring" (p. 463). Eventually, however, this study may lead to the

identification of new concepts and associated variables – although not necessarily fitting the concept of place – which can be measured in quantitative approaches by other studies.

Having selected a qualitative approach as an overall research strategy, the following questions can help specify its details: "(a) How will empirical materials be informed by and interact with the paradigm in question? (b) Who or what will be studied? (c) What strategies of inquiry will be used? (d) What methods or research tools will be used for collecting and analyzing empirical materials?" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, p. xii). For the first question, Morse's (1998, p. 63) scheme linking the major types of qualitative research questions and the research strategies to methods used is helpful (see Table 1, below). Following Table 1, the research questions of this study fall in both the descriptive type and 'process' type (place is a process – see above, Massey 1994). Thus, both ethnography and grounded theory apply as research strategies. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) have argued that ethnography and grounded theory are not mutually exclusive. Grounded theory, they hold, offers ethnographers useful guidelines for conducting research in situations when they find themselves "seeing data everywhere and nowhere, gathering everything and nothing" (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001, p. 161). Ethnographers can modify the methods of grounded theory to work within the worlds they study and meet the specific objectives of a study (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001, p. 171).

Table 1.   Comparison of the major types of qualitative strategies

Type of Research Question		Strategy	Paradigm	Method	Other Data Sources
Meaning questions – eliciting the essence of experience		Phenomenology	Philosophy (phenomeno-logy)	Audiotaped "conversations"; written anecdotes of personal experiences	Phenomeno-logical literature; philosophical reflections; poetry; art
Descriptive questions – of values, beliefs, practices of cultural group		Ethnography	Anthropology (culture)	Unstructured interviews, participant observation, field notes	Documents; records; photography; maps; genealogies; social network diagrams
'Process' questions – experience over time or change, may have stages and phases		Grounded theory	Sociology (symbolic interactio-nism)	Interviews (tape-recorded)	Participant observation; memoing; diary
Questions regarding verbal interactions and dialogue		Ethnomethodo-logy; discourse analysis	Semiotics	Dialogue (audio/ video recording)	Observation; field notes
Behavioral questions					
	Macro	Participant observation	Anthropology	Observation; field notes	Interviews; photography
	Micro	Qualitative ethology	Zoology	Observation	Videotape; note taking

Source: Morse 1998

The research strategy of this study combines ethnography with grounded theory. Following Atkinson and Hammersley (1998), this study is ethnographic because of the following features:

- Strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena.

- Investigation of a (relatively) small number of cases in detail.

- Analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and of human actions, the product of which will mainly take the form of verbal descriptions and explanations.

Moreover, I propose a type of ethnography that has been termed "multi-sited ethnography" (Rodman 1992, Marcus 1998). As Marcus (1998) observed, multi-sited ethnography is not just another name for the comparative study design that has long been a part of anthropological practice. Multi-sited ethnography matches the nature of the research question and the concept of place adopted here because it makes it possible to (i) study "cultural logics" that are "multiply produced" and (ii) follow connections, associations, and putative relationships between these cultural logics and the "system" (Marcus 1998, p. 81). While the place-focus should be preserved, argued Marcus, the ethnographic project should aim at representing the system or pieces of the system – that is, the study of rationalized, institutionalized life. The idea, he argued, is that:

> any cultural identity or activity is constructed by multiple agents in varying contexts, or places, and that ethnography must be strategically conceived to represent this sort of multiplicity, and to specify both intended and unintended consequences in the network of complex connections within a system of places (Marcus 1998, p. 52).

The rationales behind the selection of the grounded theory approach are explained in section 3.4.1 (see below).

3.1.1. The philosophical underpinnings of this research

The philosophical underpinnings of this research draw on Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) "reflexivity approach," which strikes a balance between positivism and naturalism in ethnography. Briefly, the basic assumption is that "all social research is founded on the human capacity for participant observation," and "rather than engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher completely, we should set about understanding them" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 21). With this understanding in mind, the researcher is able to "produce accounts of the social world and justify them without placing reliance on futile appeals to empiricism, of either positivist or naturalist varieties" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 21-22).

3.2. The study site and case

3.2.1. Description of the study site

The Prespa region was the study site of this research (see Figure 1.). Spanning the borders of Albania, Greece, and Macedonia in the western Balkans, the Prespa region encompasses unique lake ecosystems that have been identified as one of the most important European freshwater systems.

Information about Prespa is fragmentary, incomplete, and sometimes contradictory. Until recently, it was quite a difficult task to arrive at a systematic scientific description of Prespa. Following World War II and the establishment of the Iron Curtain, the scientists were increasingly working within the national borders that cross Prespa. At some points, crossborder or joint research actions were unimaginable.

Figure 1. The Prespa basin

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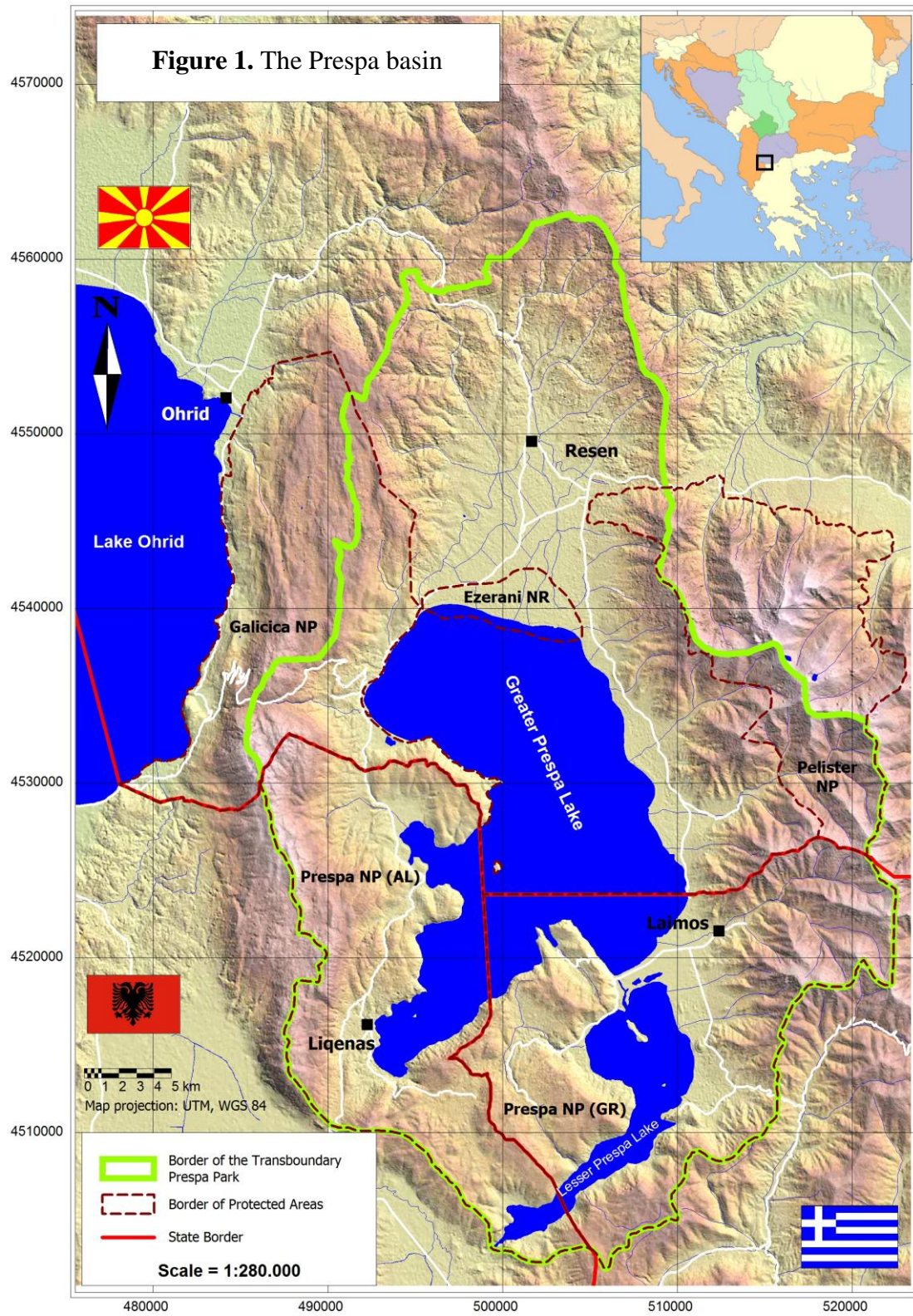
The collapse of the Iron Curtain and the growing awareness that environmental issues in Prespa cannot be addressed independently by the three countries sharing Prespa provided for a change. Since the late 1990s there has been a steady exchange of information across the national borders, which eventually led to crossborder research, policy making, and management planning.

The Declaration on the Creation of the Prespa Park and the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Lakes and their Surroundings (SPP 2011a), signed on February 2, 2000, by the prime ministers of Greece, Albania, and Macedonia, gave political support to the process. It was soon followed by the endorsement of the first *Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park* (SAP) (SPP *et al.* 2005), prepared in a collaborative effort by scientists and environmental experts from the three countries, also following a consultation with stakeholders at the national, local, and regional levels. For the first time, this document synthesized the available scientific knowledge about Prespa. The structure of the SAP generally follows the conceptual framework underpinning ecosystem-based management that links ecosystem conditions (services) and human well-being. More recently, *the Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area* (EC 2010) has provided a legal framework for the further development of transboundary cooperation in Prespa.

The following description of Prespa is largely based on the structure and information presented in the Executive Summary of the SAP (SPP *et al*. 2005). Whenever additional information was used, the source is clearly indicated.

3.2.1.1.   An overview

The Prespa basin (see Figure 1, above) covers some 136,000 *ha* (calculation based on personal data), including the area of the two Prespa Lakes: Greater Prespa Lake (Lake Marco Prespa) and Lesser Prespa Lake (Lake Mirco Prespa). Due to the karstic geological composition, the area from which the water drains into the Prespa lakes has been estimated at 134,900 *ha* (Chavkalovski 1997), 221,800 *ha* (Loffler *et al.* 1998) and 151,900 *ha* (Perennou *et al.* 2009). Lesser Prespa Lake (4,740 *ha*) is shared between Greece (4,350 *ha*) and Albania (400 *ha*). Greater Prespa Lake (25,940 *ha*) is shared between Albania (4,550), Greece (3,760 *ha*), and Macedonia (17,630 *ha*). There are four islands in the lakes: Agios Achillios and Vidronissi in the Greek part of Lesser Prespa Lake, Mali Grad (Albania), and Golem Grad (Macedonia) in Greater Prespa Lake. The boundaries of the basin are marked by high mountains, of which four are dominant: Baba (2601 *m* asl) to the east, Galichica (2288 *m* asl) to the west, Plakjenska (1998 *m* asl) to the north and Suva Gora (Mali i Thate, 1770 *m* asl) to the south.

Prespa is an enclosed basin communicating via several mountain passes with the adjacent basins: Demir Hisar valley to the north (Macedonia), Pelagonia to the east (Greece and Macedonia), the Ohrid basin to the west (Albania and Macedonia) and the Billisht and Korcha basins to the south (Albania). The Prespa basin is considered to be a sub-basin of the Lake Ohrid catchment area (app. 250,000 *ha*; Watzin *et al.* 2002), which in turn is part of the Drin River basin (1,545,000 *ha*), which drains into the Adriatic Sea (Faloutsos *et al.* 2006).

The Albanian part of the Prespa basin is under the jurisdiction of the Korcha Prefecture. The Albanian part of the Greater Prespa Lake sub-basin is under the

jurisdiction of the Korcha District and the Liqenas Commune, comprising nine settlements; the Lesser Prespa Lake sub-basin is under the jurisdiction of the Devoll District and the villages in this area are part of the Proger (Shuec, Rakicke) and Billisht (Zagradec) communes. The Greek part of the Prespa basin and its 13 settlements falls under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Prespa and the Prefecture of Florina. The Macedonian part of the basin is under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Resen, comprising an urban and administrative center (Resen) and 43 rural settlements. During the Ottoman period, Prespa was divided into Upper Prespa (Gorna Prespa in Macedonian), Lower Prespa (Dolna Prespa in Macedonian) and Small Prespa (Mala Prespa in Macedonian) (Chavkalovski 2001, p. 13). This roughly corresponds to the current division of Prespa by the state borders: Macedonian Prespa (Upper Prespa), Greek Prespa (Lower Prespa) and Albanian Prespa (Mala Prespa).

There are many protected areas in the basin. The area of Prespa National Park in Albania coincides with the Albanian share of the Prespa basin (27,750 *ha*); the area of Prespa National Park in Greece is equivalent to the Greek part of the Prespa basin (32,700 *ha*; OGHL 2009). In Macedonia, 9,033 *ha* (37%; calculations based on personal data) of Galichica National Park and app. 6,300 *ha* (37%; calculations based on personal data) of Pelister National Park fall within the Prespa basin, whereas the Ezerani Strict Nature Reserve is entirely within Prespa (2,080 *ha*; OGRM 1996). In addition, the Macedonian share of Greater Prespa Lake has been declared a natural monument (17,788 *ha*; OGSRM 1977; Government of the Republic of Macedonia 2011) and a Ramsar Site (18,920 *ha*, at 853 *m* asl; Wetlands International 2011a). In the Greek part of the Prespa basin a large part of Prespa National Park and a large section of Varnous Mountain are part of the NATURA 2000 network of protected areas: SCI/SPA Ethnikos Drymos Prespon (Prespa National Park) GR 1340001

(26,613.06 *ha*; HMEPPPW 2011a) and SCI/SPA Ori Varnounta (Varnous Mountain) GR 1340003 (6,076.62 *ha*; HMEPPPW 2011b). Moreover, the part of Lesser Prespa Lake in Greece has also been declared a Ramsar Site (Lake Mikra Prespa, GREECE 3GR008), covering an area of 5,078 *ha* (Wetlands International 2011b). There are also two international regimes providing the conservation capacity for larger-scale ecological management. *The Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Lake Ohrid and its Watershed* covers not only the Lake Ohrid basin, but also the Albanian and Macedonian areas of the Prespa basin (ECOLEX 2011). *The Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area* covers the entire Prespa basin (EC 2010).

3.2.1.2. The abiotic environment

The geomorphology of the basin is defined by the two lakes and the mountain ranges around them: Plakjenska, Suva Gora (Mali i Thate), Baba and Galichica. The upper geological strata of Plakjenska and Baba consist of metamorphic rocks with limited permeability, predominantly crystalline schist, except for the eastern part of Baba where granite igneous rocks prevail. The upper geological strata of Galichica and Suva Gora are dominated by karstified carbonates intersected by channels with high hydraulic conductivity.

The climate of the Prespa Lakes basin is characterized as mild continental-central European with Mediterranean influences. The hydrology of the Prespa lakes is complex. The water from Greater Prespa Lake (app. 850 *m* asl) drains into the adjacent Lake Ohrid basin (693 *m* asl) through underground channels in the limestone strata of Galichica Mountain. In the course of the 20th century the natural hydrology

of the basin was significantly altered. In the period from 1935 to 1945, the Agios Germanos Stream, in Greece, was partly diverted from Lesser to Greater Prespa Lake (Catsadorakis and Malakou 1997). In 1976 the Devoll River in the Korcha basin was connected to the Albanian part of Lesser Prespa Lake; during winter the water flowed into the lake and in the summer it was pumped back to irrigate some 30,000 *ha* in the Korcha basin. In 1986, a sluice gate was installed at the end of the channel connecting Lesser with Greater Prespa Lake in Greece.

The geological history of the Prespa lakes is marked by a continuous, though irregular, decline of the water level. Recently, the fluctuation of the water level of the Lesser Prespa Lake has been largely related to the construction of the channel connecting the lake with the Devoll River in the Korcha basin and the withdrawal of water for irrigation both in Albania and Greece. Cyclical climate changes, processes in the karstic underground connection to Lake Ohrid, and increased water abstraction for human uses in the three countries have all contributed to the recent fluctuation of the water level of Greater Prespa Lake (up to 8 m below the reference level). With respect to water quality, Lesser Prespa Lake is classified as close to eutrophic and Greater Prespa Lake is considered oligotrophic although its transparency is on a continuous decline.

3.2.1.3.   The biotic environment

The vegetation cover in the basin is classified in the Balkan sub-zone of the Sub-Mediterranean vegetation zone. The following vegetation belts are successively arranged starting from the lake level to the summits of the mountains: lowland woodland vegetation, deciduous oak forests, deciduous beech forests, mixed beech-fir forests, sub-alpine vegetation of dwarf shrubs, and alpine grassland.

The Prespa basin is characterized by rich biodiversity and a high level of endemism, which can be attributed to its location (in the peri-Mediterrannean zone), its geomorphology, the two different geological substrates (crystalline schist and limestone), the very old age of the lakes, the local climate, the high altitudinal differences within a small area, its paleogeography, and the long history of human presence. The Prespa basin hosts many endemic species. There are 16 endemic species of invertebrates. Out of a total of 23 fish species recorded, 5 are endemic to Prespa and 2 are endemic to the Balkans. Among the 11 amphibian species recorded in the basin there are two species and four subspecies endemic to the Balkans. In Prespa, 22 reptile species have been recorded thus far. The avifauna of Prespa is rich and marked by the presence of significant populations of rare species of international importance, such as the Dalmatian pelican, the white pelican, and the pygmy cormorant. Among the mammals registered in the basin four are considered to be threatened in Europe: the wolf, the brown bear, the otter and the chamois.

3.2.1.4. *Anthropogenic environment*

The primary economic sector is the most significant in all three countries in the basin. In the Greek part, 48% of the households are mainly occupied in agriculture. In the Macedonian part, fruit growing, apples in particular, is the most important agricultural activity. Stock breeding, sheep and goats in particular, is important in the Greek part (33.5% of the labor force) and in Albania is gaining in importance. Fishing currently engages some 13% of the labor force in Greece. Over the last 3-4 decades there has been a steady decrease in both productivity and the number of fishermen in all three countries.

Forestry occupies only 3% of the labor force in the Greek part and makes a very low contribution to the income of households. On the Albanian side forests have been heavily degraded in the past. In Macedonia, forestry operations are carried out by the national public forestry company, Makedonski Shumi, and the administrations of the Galichica and Pelister national parks. They employ in total about 80 people from the Prespa region.

The secondary sector in the Greek part today is restricted to a few fur workshops employing about 25 people and the tertiary sector occupies around 16% of the active labor force, mainly related to recreation and tourism. The secondary sector in the Macedonian part employs 2,500 to 3,000 people in various enterprises. The tertiary sector in Macedonia, the tourism industry in particular, has suffered serious setbacks since the early 1990s. The number of visitors and overnights in the early 1990s was about 35,000 and 220,000 respectively; in 2003 the Macedonian part of Prespa received about 21,000 visitors who spent some 100,000 overnights (REC 2004).

3.2.1.5. *Social parameters and trends*

The Prespa watershed has slightly over 23,000 permanent residents: about 16,800 in the Macedonian part (State Statistical Office 2003), around 1,300 in the Greek, and somewhat more than 5,000 in the Albanian part. There are three dominant ethnic groups in the Macedonian part of Prespa: ethnic Macedonians account for 76% of all citizens; some 10% of the residents are ethnic Turks, and ethnic Albanians comprise about 9% of the total population (State Statistical Office 2003). In the Albanian part of the basin, the villages in the Liqenas commune are inhabited by ethnic Macedonians (Liqenas Commune 2007) and the residents of the Proger and Billisht

commnues are ethnic Albanians. The population within the Greek part of Prespa comprises three groups of people of Greek nationality: (1) "locals," (2) descendants of refugee families from the Black Sea (settled in 1924); and (3) nomadic Vlachos pastoralists from Epirus who moved into the area in 1951 (Catsadorakis 1999). Over the last two decades the population in the Macedonian and Greek parts has decreased significantly. In the Macedonian part, the share of the young population is on a constant decline, whereas the proportion of elderly people is increasing (State Statistical Office 2003). Since the 1990s, in the Albanian part of Prespa out-migration has intensified mainly due to a high unemployment rate.

The water supply, road, power, and telecommunication infrastructure in Greek and the Macedonian Prespa are generally satisfactory. In the Albanian part the basic physical infrastructure needs extensive upgrading. There are intermittent water shortages in all three parts, especially during the summer months. There is no wastewater treatment plant and no organized waste management in Greek Prespa. The Albanian part lacks wastewater collection and treatment as well as solid waste disposal facilities. In the Macedonian Prespa there are separate landfills for household and industrial solid waste. The wastewater from households in Resen and nearby settlements is collected and partly treated (primary and secondary treatment only).

Prespa is rich in cultural and historical values, which include prehistoric settlements, monuments, and artwork from the Antique and Byzantine periods, as well as a wealth of local traditions, practices, architecture, and art forms. The monuments are generally in need of maintenance and restoration.

3.2.1.6.   Addendum: The human history of Prespa

The above description of the Prespa basin, following the SAP, would remain fairly incomplete without a historical perspective. Unlike the description of the environment, however, currently there is no common narrative on Prespa's human history, least one developed through a collaborative effort of academics and experts from the three countries. Arguably, it is because of history that the SAP lacks an important section in the analysis of the factors affecting ecosystem management – national politics. And, as shown below, the influence of the national politics on Prespa has been pervasive. On closer inspection, the statements of the CNN reporter and the EU Environment Commissioner presented in the beginning of Chapter 1 are carefully balanced to avoid naming the three countries sharing Prespa. Lake Prespa is described as "shared by three countries" and the cooperation in its protection may improve the "relations between the peoples of the countries." These two examples are instances of what scholars have named the "Macedonian Question" and the related "Macedonian naming controversy" (Roudometof 2000, p. 1; Agnew 2009, p. 76). According to Roudometof (2000, p. 7) the Macedonian naming controversy concerns the manner in which Bulgarians, Greeks, and Macedonians view and interpret Macedonian identity. Roudometof (2000, p. 7) notes that "the conflict centers on the premise that the Slavs of Macedonia constitute a distinct nation, the Macedonian nation."

The roots of the modern Macedonian state can be traced back to the mid-1940s, when the People's Republic of Macedonia (later the Socialist Republic of Macedonia) became a constituent of the Communist Yugoslav federation. More precisely, upon an initiative of the Communist Party of Macedonia, on August 2, 1944, the Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (Antifashistichko Sobranie za Narodno Osloboduvanje na Makedonija – ASNOM)

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held its first session. The ASNOM proclaimed the People's Democratic Republic of Macedonia as a federal unit of Yugoslavia, declared itself as the constituent assembly and assumed full legislative and executive powers. The initiative for the establishment of the ASNOM was launched by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia at its meeting of August, 1943, held in a village in Prespa.

In 1987, in the wake of the collapse of the Iron Curtain in Europe and following an administrative reform in Greece, three out of the thirteen newly established regions (Greek: περιφέρειες, periphery) contained the name Macedonia: East Macedonia and Thrace Periphery, Central Macedonia Periphery and West Macedonia Periphery. After the collapse of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, the Socialist Republic of Macedonia declared its complete sovereignty and independence as the Republic of Macedonia. However, in accordance with the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations (resolution 225 of 1993), the Republic of Macedonia was admitted as a member "being provisionally referred to for all purposes within the United Nations as "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" pending settlement of the difference that has arisen over the name of the State" with Greece (MCHRC 2011).

The events leading to the establishment of the Republic of Macedonia are connected to Prespa in many other ways, but most significantly through Tsar Samuel, the creator of the medieval "Macedonian Kingdom" (Ostrogorski 2002). In the opening speech of the first session of ASNOM, the oldest among the 115 delegates, Panko Brashnarov, stated (Cekov 2011):

> In this moment, at this historical place "Saint Father Prohor Pchinjski"
> and on this historical day – Ilinden – when we announce open the first
> Anti-Fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia, my

soul is filled with joy and before my half-blinded eyes I see all the rivers

from the Pchinja and Vardar to the Mesta and Bistrica inundating all of

the Macedonian country, as if wishing to wash off from the Macedonian

people the ten-century-long shame of occupation *since the collapse of*

Samuel's state, so that today can be born a new, bright and free

Macedonian state (emphasis added).

The link between the "Samuel's state," the Macedonian nation, and the

Republic of Macedonia has been a source of controversy on its own. The Russian-

born Yugoslav historian and distinguished Byzantinist, Ostrogorski, made the

following comments concerning Samuel and his kingdom (Ostrogorski 2002, p. 111):

Samuel has created a powerful kingdom initially with a capitol in Prespa

and then in Ohrid. In terms of organization of the state and the church,

the new kingdom was a continuation of that of Simeon and Petar and

thus to its creators and to the Byzantines it was a true Bulgarian

kingdom. In reality, however, his *Macedonian kingdom* was essentially

different from the former kingdom of the Bulgars. In composition and

character, it represented a new and distinctive phenomenon. The balance

had shifted toward the west and south, and Macedonia, a peripheral

region in the old Bulgarian kingdom, was its real center (emphasis

added).

Vasiliev (1973, p. 320), however, considered Samuel to be "the energetic ruler

of western independent Bulgaria." Samuel went into a long war with the Byzantine

Empire, but was ultimately fiercely defeated by Basil II (thus given the name of

Bulgaroctonus, the "Bulgar-Slayer"). Soon after, in 1018 "the first Bulgarian kingdom

ceased to exist, for it was transformed into a Byzantine province ruled by an imperial governor" (Vasiliev 1973, p. 320).

Similarly Gregory (2005, p. 243) speaks of Samuel as one of the four sons of the Kometopouloi, "a provincial governor in Macedonia" and the "founder of the second period of Bulgarian greatness in the Middle Ages." Gregory, however, seems to concur with some of Ostrogorski's interpretations (2005, p. 243):

> Even though the focus of power in this state was at Ohrid, in Slavic Macedonia (far from the earlier center at Pliska), both Samuel and the Byzantines regarded it as the direct descendant of the empire of Symeon some 150 years earlier. One of the first things Samuel did was to restore the independent Bulgarian patriarchate that had been abolished by Tzimiskes.

Recently, Roudometof (2000, p. 14) has concluded that "local historiography uses historical experience strategically in order to bolster the Greek or Macedonian national narratives." Not surprisingly, the controversial role of Samuel as father of the Macedonian kingdom is used differently in historiography of Prespa in the different countries. Such examples abound in popular literature on Prespa, including works authored by scientists and experts in environmental management. For instance, in a recent paper on conservation and management issues in the Greek part of the Prespa basin, Catsadorakis and Malakou (1997) argue that "the key conservation and management issues of today … are closely associated with the past and present socio-economic and cultural conditions of Prespa." Catsadorakis and Malakou (1997) provide a brief timeline of major events in the 20th century in the Greek part of the basin with the aim to "place Prespa within a historic context necessary for understanding its present-day social situation" (p. 176). The complete timeline of

events is presented in Appendix 1. Kiril Jonovski (2002), an amateur local historian and environmental activist, also prepared a timeline of major events in the Prespa region beginning from the 5th Century B.C. to 2002 (the complete timeline of events is presented in Appendix 2). The differing focus and interpretation of the major events in the two timelines reflect the interests of the authors, but also the influence of the Macedonian Question.

3.2.1.7. *An experiential perspective on Prespa*

Georgios Catsadorakis, one of the main proponents of nature conservation in the Prespa basin, has recently pointed to what would it take to safeguard the natural and cultural heritage of Prespa. Recalling the first time he heard of Prespa in 1974, and after many years of studying the ecology of birds in Prespa National Park, he noted: "Now, after living in Prespa for many years, I see things differently. I feel at home" (Catsadorakis 1999, p. 1). It is from this perspective that in the introduction of his book on Prespa he wrote:

> The structure of the lake basin, the relief and scale of the landscape, are such that the place has managed to preserve that magic feeling of the unknown and mysterious, while at the same time leaving one with a sense of familiar and reassuring. You sit for a moment on a sculpted stone in the ruins of a Byzantine church. Pelicans are circling majestically overhead. You can hear the drone of a tractor ploughing and a cow lowing in the distance. The breeze that caresses your cheek is heavy one moment with the scent of dog roses, the next with the smell of a lake carp frying in the *tavérna* nearby. Everything is close at this small and human scale and, at the same time, universal and

timeless. United and separate. The pelican fishes side by side with the fisherman. Once they might have been rivals. Today they are friends. Tomorrow they might become enemies once more. What is certain is that between them there exists a living relationship. It is the most immediate relationship possible for a man to have with nature, with things and living creatures that are real, uncalculating and free (Catsadorakis 1999, p. xiv).

The above quotation from Catsadorakis' book is an instance of what Ingold called "a genuine ecology of life" (2000, p. 16):

I believe it is necessary that … we descend from the imaginary heights of abstract reason and resituate ourselves in an active and ongoing engagement with our environments, if we are ever to arrive at an ecology that is capable of recovering the reality of the life process itself. In short, my aim is to replace the stale dichotomy of nature and culture with the dynamic synergy of organism and environment, in order to regain *a genuine ecology of life*. This ecology, however, will look very different from the kind that has become familiar to us from scientific textbooks (emphasis added).

This description of the study site first provided a systematic and objective description of the Prespa basin following the theoretical framework developed in the field of ecosystem-based management. It was then amended by a short historical account of Prespa. Finally, following Ingold (2000), this chapter has argued that these descriptions need to be complemented with insights from those having a day-to-day intimate involvement with the environment and ecosystems in their places. Indeed, the

"experiential perspective" is the very object of interest in this research. Chapters 4 and 5 present numerous excerpts taken from personal stories of the everyday lives of people in Prespa which together convey the rich meanings attached to the region. By combining the two approaches this research project enriches our knowledge of Prespa.

3.2.2. Cases and settings

Usually ethnographers study only one or a small number of cases and settings (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p.6). The number of cases and settings should be as small as possible; the more settings studied the less time can be spent in each (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p. 39). Therefore, there needs to be a trade-off between the breadth and depth of investigation. For the purposes of this research the Prespa region can be thought of as a case study with three cases:

CASE I: A village on the western shore of Greater Prespa Lake in Albania. Its population depends mainly on subsistence agriculture and partly on forestry and fishing. Many of the men in the village fill seasonal and temporary jobs abroad, primarily in neighboring Macedonia and Greece. The village has poor public infrastructure and poverty is widespread. The population consists of ethnic Macedonians of Orthodox Christian faith; the people in the village speak both Macedonian and Albanian.

CASE II: A village in the northwestern part of the Prespa region in Macedonia. The village is situated at the base of the mountains in the northwestern part of the Prespa basin in Macedonia and is relatively far from the lake. Agriculture, mainly commercial apple growing, is the dominant economic activity; a few of the residents work in industry, the service and public sectors in the nearby town of Resen. The population consists of ethnic Macedonians of Orthodox Christian faith.

CASE III: A village in the northeastern part of the Prespa region in Macedonia. The village is situated at the margins of the Prespa Plain, in the northeastern part of the Prespa basin in Macedonia and is relatively far from the lake. Agriculture is the dominant economic activity; a few of the residents work in industry, the service and public sectors in the nearby town of Resen. The population consists mainly of ethnic Macedonians of Orthodox Christian faith; there are quite a few families of ethnic Albanians, of Muslim faith, who speak both Albanian and Macedonian.

Each of these cases included a number of settings. Settings are the locales – in terms of the concept of place followed here (see Proposition 1 in section 2.4) – where behaviors and activities relevant to this study took place. For instance, in the three cases of this study the settings included: private homes, village churches, a nearby monastery, a bistro where local farmers/fisherman meet in the village in Macedonia, a coffee bar and a restaurant in the village in Albania, squares or street corners were villagers meet to chat, and local grocery stores. To these should be added outdoor settings where villagers participated in various activities and events, such as fishing, herding, hunting, festivities, and religious ceremonies.

The participants from the three cases were interviewed to understand how they construct their self-identity and place-identity. In order to explore fully the sense of place that participants hold for places of different geographical scales it was necessary to "follow" them in settings outside their villages (Marcus 1998, p. 52). I often travelled to the town of Resen and other villages and places in all three countries in the Prespa region to meet friends and relatives of the participants, conduct additional interviews, or participate in formal and informal private and public events.

Following grounded theory as a research strategy adopted here, it was necessary to specify the kinds of groups to be studied and to indicate the range of types necessary to achieve the desired scope and conceptual generality of the theory I intended to develop (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 55-60). Identifying these basic types of groups is important because they controlled the generality of both the scope of the population and the conceptual level of theory I intended to develop (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 52). As Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued, "the initial decisions for theoretical collection of data are based only on a general sociological perspective and on a general subject or problem area … not on a preconceived theoretical framework" (p. 45). Thus, following the methodological propositions of this study, I identified four basic types of groups which guided the initial sampling: (i) gender; (ii) ethnicity (often coinciding with religious orientation); (iii) occupation (socio-economic status); and (iv) age.

3.3. *Field methods*

3.3.1. Ethnographic interviewing

Ethnographic interviewing is a way to gather rich, detailed data directly from participants in the social worlds under study (Heyl 2001, p. 369). Ethnographic interviewing was the most important source of data in this study. Ethnographic interviews were conducted with participants from the three cases, but also in settings outside these cases, and included both female and male individuals who have a variety of backgrounds, age, ethnic identities, occupation, level of education, and certain kinds of experiences. According to Heyl (2001), ethnographic interviews are unstructured in-depth interviews in situations where "researchers have established respectful, ongoing relationships with their interviewees, including enough rapport to

develop respectful, ongoing relationships" (p. 369). Being a novice in most of the selected settings of this study, before conducting interviews it was necessary to spend some time in the setting to become familiar with the lives of potential participants, build rapport and obtain consent from the participants, but also to "cultivate and activate fully the subjects" (Dunbar *et al.* 2001, p. 142).

Having developed rapport with the selected participants, I conducted unstructured, in-depth interviews following the "Biographic-Narrative Interview" method (BNIM) designed by Wengraf (2001). Following the BNIM, the interview protocol comprised three successive sessions:

- *Session I*: Initial elaboration of a story of the personal experience of place;

- *Review of notes*.

- *Session II*: Eliciting more story from topics mentioned in Session I;

- *Session III*: Further questions arising from a preliminary analysis of sessions I and II.

This interview design elicits and provokes narration and discourages a non-narrative response. The bulk of the data in this research was collected using unstructured in-depth interviews following the BNIM. Participants' responses usually consisted of embedded "narrative segments" (episodes) within an overarching narrative, sometimes taking the form typical of a life-story narrative (Atkinson 1998, p. 8). The narrative segments are recollections of individual experience as related to place with which they can identify easily. The narrative parts are usually interlaced with non-narrative segments in which the respondents provide unhistorical descriptions, make generalizations about the narratives told before, sometimes in the form of a layman's

theory, engage in discourse about a number of subjects which are more or less relevant for the recollected experience, and so on.

3.3.1.1. *Overview of participants*

I conducted in total 20 interviews, in two, somewhat overlapping, stages. In the first stage 15 participants were interviewed to collect personal stories of their everyday lives in their particular places; in the second, I conducted 5 additional interviews to collect stories of personal experience in the Prespa region, but also to explore questions arising from a preliminary analysis of the data collected in the previous stage. The interviews were conducted between December, 2004, and August, 2010; each one usually lasted from 1 to 3 hours, except in one case when the interview lasted 5 hours in total.

Table 2 summarizes the basic demographic data of participants interviewed in this study (see below). With the exception of one participant, the names in the table and in the following chapters are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants. One participant – Kiril Jonovski – has authored two books on Prespa which provided rich data for this research. For the purposes of the research it was useful to compare the data from Jonovski's interview with the data presented in his books and, therefore, anonymity of this participant could not be maintained. Chapters 4 and 5 present more details about those participants whose talk is quoted in the two chapters.

3.3.2. Participant observation

The main data-gathering method in this research was in-depth, open-ended interviews with participants, as explained above. However, I also used participant observation to

supplement the interview data. Participant observation is a process that begins with the day-by-day writing up of field notes and culminates in an integrated coherent ethnographic account (Emerson *et al.* 2001, p. 353). Writing field notes is a way of "reducing just-observed events, persons and places to written accounts" in "forms that can be reviewed, studied and thought about time and time again" (Emerson *et al.* 2001, p. 353).

Table 2.   Overview of participants

No	Participant (pseudonym)	Age	Occupation	Education Level	Marital Status	Citizenship	Ethnic Identity	Place of Residence	Interview Date
STAGE I									
1	Naum	late 60s	farmer	primary	married	Albanian	Macedonian	village 1, Albania	Dec. 2004
2	Mannka	40s	farmer	secondary	married	Albanian	Macedonian	village 1, Albania	Dec. 2004
3	Dimche	30s	fisherman	secondary	married	Albanian	Macedonian	village 1, Albania	Dec. 2004
4	Stoyan	mid-70s	farmer	secondary	married	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 2, Macedonia	Jan. 2005
5	Pettko	mid-70s	farmer	primary	married	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 2, Macedonia	Jan. 2005
6	Militsa	50s	nurse	secondary	married	Macedonian	Serbian	village 2, Macedonia	Jan. 2005
7	Alexandar	18 years	student	university	single	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 2, Macedonia	Jan. 2005
8	Anton	20s	farmer	primary	single	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 2, Macedonia	Jan. 2005
9	Hrysto	early 50s	farmer	primary	married	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 2, Macedonia	Jan. 2005
10	Zoran	early 30s	farmer	primary	single	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 3, Macedonia	July 2005
11	Gotse	late 20s	farmer	secondary	single	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 3, Macedonia	July 2005
12	Fatime	70s	teacher	university	married	Macedonian	Albanian	Skopje, Macedonia	March 2006
13	Muzza	50s	farmer	primary	married	Macedonian	Turkish	village 4, Macedonia	Aug. 2006
14	Lidia	30s	environment expert	university	married	Macedonian	Macedonian	Resen, Macedonia	Dec. 2008
15	Vladimir	late 20s	environment expert	university	single	Macedonian	Macedonian	Resen, Macedonia	Dec. 2008
STAGE II									
16	Kiril Jonovski	80s	journalist	university	married	Macedonian	Macedonian	village 5, Macedonia	Aug. 2006
17	Boyan	80s	forester	university	married	Macedonian	Macedonian	Ohrid, Macedonia	June 2010
18	Vanngel	mid-40s	economist	university	married	Albanian	Macedonian	village 1, Albania	Aug. 2010
19	Dimitrios	30s	environment expert	university	married	Greek	Greek	Village 6, Greece	July 2010
20	Miroslav	mid-40s	economist	university	married	Macedonian	Macedonian	Ohrid, Macedonia	July 2010

In order to observe and experience behaviors and activities in settings which were relevant to this research, I established myself in two villages in Prespa. In 2004 I spent three weeks in the Albanian part of Prespa in a village situated on the western shore of Greater Prespa Lake. Initially, I spent several days, staying in a motel in the village. I returned in December 2004 and spent an additional three weeks with the family of a friend of mine. In the Macedonian part of Prespa I spent four weeks in January 2005, in a village situated in the northern part of the basin, at the base of the mountains. I stayed with the family of a friend of mine.

After this period I often travelled to the town of Resen and other villages and places in all three countries in the Prespa region to meet people, conduct interviews, or participate in formal and informal private and public events. For instance, in 2006, in a private house in a village in Prespa, I participated in a discussion with two Prespiots, ethnic Albanians, on the history of ethnic Albanians in Prespa. The observations I made during this private discussion allowed me to note a construction of Prespa's identity which was not presented in other sources of data such as interview transcripts and documents.

After I was employed in the Public Institution Galichica National Park (PIGNP), in August 2007, I traveled to Prespa more often as part of my regular activities in nature conservation and had many opportunities to observe and participate in activities in various settings. As a representative of the PIGNP, based in Ohrid, Macedonia, I attended several public meetings which allowed me to understand the complex interdependence between local and non-local perspectives on Prespa. For example, in December 2009, in Korcha, Albania, I participated in a workshop on the draft *Lake Prespa Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis* (IWLEARN

2011). The workshop was organized by the Transboundary Unit of the Prespa Project based in Skopje, Macedonia. In June 2010, I participated in a public hearing on the *Draft Management Plan for Galichica National Park for the period 2010-2020* (PIGNP 2011). The event was organized by the PIGNP and the Macedonian Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MoEPP) in the town hall of Resen. At this public hearing I represented the PIGNP and gave a presentation on the document. In February 2011, I represented the PIGNP in a public hearing concerning the *Proposal for a Re-proclamation of the Locality Ezerani on the Prespa Lake as a Protected Area in the Category Nature Park* (OGRM 2010). The meeting was organized by the MoEPP in the town hall of Resen. In February 2011, I represented the PIGNP in the international conference *Integrated Protection of the Transboundary Prespa Region: Establishment of a trilateral UNESCO Biosphere Reserve at Prespa Lake*. The conference was organized by the MoEPP in cooperation with UNESCO, UNDP, KfW and the PIGNP, in Ohrid, Macedonia.

During the fieldwork I kept a fieldwork log to document my own reflexivity and changes in my understanding of the setting as well as to learn more about the participants. Throughout my data collection, I kept track of relevant recurring themes, codes, and categories.

3.3.3. Documents and photographs

In addition to interviews and observations, I collected documents that helped me learn about history of Prespa and particularly about how Prespiots construct/represent Prespa's identity. Documentary materials having some relevance to my research were of informal or official character. Informal documents included academic, professional,

and layman's literature and mass media products. Formal documents included legal acts and local government decisions.

The analysis of images (including geographical maps) helped me explore the relationship between visual and other data (Pink 2001, 96). This technique was particularly relevant to focus attention on the visual and visible aspects of identity formation, expression, performance, and even conflict (Cosgrove 2003, p. 258).

3.4. The analytical strategy

Analysis is a search for patterns of cultural behavior, artifacts, and knowledge that people have learned or created (Spradley 1980). According to Atkinson and Hammersley (1998), ethnographic analysis of data involves "explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations" (p. 111). Quantitative methods, if used, play a subordinate role at most. In ethnography the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).

For the analysis of interview data I used various methods of narrative analysis. I followed Mishler (1986), who observed that "telling stories is one of the significant ways individuals construct and express meaning" (p. 67). Following Riesseman (1993), participants' talk was treated as an object of investigation (p. 1). I followed Riesseman (1993) to analyze participant's entire talk in terms of coherence (structural and thematic) and its parts (episodes) in terms of temporal ordering and evaluation. Initially, I analyzed participants' talk to differentiate the narrative (episodes) from non-narrative parts. The narrative parts were then analyzed to identify the elements following Labov's (Labov and Waletzky 1997) structural approach. According to

Labov, each "fully formed" narrative has the following six formal parts (elements): (i) *an abstract* (summary of the substance of the narrative); (ii) *orientation* (time, place, situation, participants); (iii) *complicating action* (sequence of events); (iv) *evaluation* (significance and meaning of the action, attitude of the narrator); (v) *resolution* (what finally happened); and (vi) *coda* (returning the perspective to the present) (Labov and Waletzky 1997, Riesseman 1993).

As mentioned in section 3.1, for the purposes of this study I combined ethnography and grounded theory. Having adopted grounded theory as a research strategy, the analysis of data followed "theoretical sampling," explained below.

3.4.1. Grounded theory and theoretical sampling

Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) have argued that grounded theory, with its flexible strategies, can guide ethnographers in their fieldwork and analysis (p. 160). Combining ethnography and grounded theory further strengthens the iterative mode of analysis in this study. Following the grounded-theory strategy, the analysis of data pursued the following set of principles:

— Simultaneous data-collection and analysis;

— Pursuit of emergent themes through early data analysis;

— Discovery of basic social processes within the data;

— Inductive construction of abstract categories that explain and synthesize these processes;

— Integration of categories into a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions and consequences of the process(es) (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001, 160).

The analytical strategy deployed in grounded theory is closely related to the method of "theoretical sampling." Theoretical sampling refers to the "process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 45). Thus, it is important to emphasize that the collection of data is controlled by the emerging theory. The initial theoretical framework for this research was outlined in the form of six theoretical propositions (see section 2.4.). Following these propositions, I selected the cases, settings, and the kinds of groups to be studied, which in turn influenced the initial data collection; the subsequent collection of data was achieved with theoretical sampling.

Theoretical sampling in grounded theory is closely linked to the general method of comparative analysis (Glaser and Straus 1967). Comparative analysis is guided by the logic of the ongoing inclusion of groups according to their theoretical relevance for furthering the development of the emerging categories. As I tried to maximize differences in the basic groups, that is, to maximize the varieties of data bearing on a category, it was necessary to include participants outside the three cases mentioned above. For instance, because it was difficult to reach rapport and obtain consent from ethnic Albanian women in Case III, I conducted an interview with a an ethnic Albanian woman living and Skopje, but who was born in another village, situated in the eastern shore of Greater Prespa Lake, in Macedonia. Also, in order to

diversify the group type "occupation," I interviewed people from the town of Resen in the Macedonian part of Prespa and from a village in the Greek part of Prespa, as well as from the city of Ohrid, situated in the vicinity of the Prespa basin. The sampling of the types of groups pertinent to a category ended when I noted that similar themes occurred over and over again, that is, there was empirical evidence that a category was saturated (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 61).

The ultimate goal of theoretical sampling is to discover categories and their properties and to suggest how they can be interrelated into a theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 62). Therefore, the principal concern of the analysis in this study was to develop conceptual categories and models that describe the relationships between them rather than theory testing. However, developing descriptions and explanations was equally important. This analytical strategy resonates with the "reflexivity approach" of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) as a philosophical framework for this research (see section 3.1.1), according to which the primary goal of research is the production of knowledge.

CHAPTER 4. PLACES OF EVERYDAY LIFE: CONSTRUCTION OF SELF-IDENTITY AND PERSONALIZED PLACE MEANINGS

Following the theoretical framework informing this study, it was suggested that the construction and maintenance of place meanings take place at both the individual and collective levels, although they are never purely personalized or purely collective. The intention in the first stage of this research was to develop a better understanding of how personalized place meanings vary among individuals and the unique conditions in which they find themselves. Clues on how personal place meanings are related to those constructed at collective levels, such as the community, institutions and other levels, were also expected at this stage.

The analysis presented in this chapter takes as a premise the claim that places can retain a position of significance for individuals because they are repositories of personalized memories and the concrete setting of everyday routines. This assumption lends significance to the experiences of people who live in and otherwise interact with places. To explore the inextricable links between the lives, movements and activities of people and place, fifteen unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted during the first phase of the research. The interview protocol was designed to elicit personal stories of participants' everyday lives in their particular places, as they conceived them. I also took participant observation notes which complemented the interview data. These data reveal considerable diversity in the experiences of place, and constitute the basis for the elaboration of several key themes in person-place relationships.

What the transcripts of interview sessions yield under analysis are patterns of representations which are reflected in four salient and interrelated themes: family, career/occupation, community, and the biophysical environment. These representations of the self in connection to place involve three constructive processes: (i) mapping the self through the family, (ii) matching the self and place, and (iii) reconfiguring the self and place. The processes through which self-identity and place are mutually constructed are simultaneous and overlapping. A number of abstract categories were constructed to explain and synthesize these processes.

The purpose of this chapter is first to introduce the participants whose narratives are quoted in this chapter. This chapter presents extracts from participants' narratives which provide rich examples of the everyday experience in their places and illustrate various points in the analysis. In the subsequent sections the major themes and processes in the empirical data, as well as the related emerging categories are discussed, focusing on the construction of self-identity and place and how they are related. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and recommendations for the second stage of the research.

4.1. *Presentation of the participants*

The age span of the individuals participating in the first stage of the research ranged from 18 to 70+. In this section, only those participants whose narratives are quoted in this chapter are presented. In order to protect their identity, a general introduction is offered which highlights significant events in their life histories. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants all names used in the text are pseudonyms. The participants are arranged in the same sequence as they appear in the following sub-sections.

Fatime is a woman in her 70s; she was born in a village in the Macedonian part of the Prespa region, located near the eastern shore of Greater Prespa Lake. During Second World War her two brothers joined the partisan movement, which was the reason for Italian and Bulgarian occupation forces to watch closely the activities of all members of her family. Soon after the war ended her father died and, following his last wishes, she and her mother became communist activists. Later in the life she married and moved to Skopje, the capitol of Macedonia, working as a teacher. She regularly visits her home village, especially during the summer season, staying in her family house. The interview was conducted on March 19, 2006, at her house in Skopje.

Militsa is a woman in her 50s, a wife and mother of two. She was born to a Serbian family near Brezovac in Kosovo. Despite opposition from her mother and siblings, she married a Macedonian and moved into his family house in a village in the Prespa region, situated in the foothills of the mountains. In the beginning she shared the house with her parents-in-law, and more recently with her son, daughter-in-law, and their children. At the beginning of her marriage she accompanied her husband, who was a truck driver, and traveled to many places in Yugoslavia. After she had children, she traveled much less, mainly to her sister's in Belgrade and later to her daughter's in Australia. After the secession of Kosovo from Serbia, most of the Serbs abandoned her place of origin. This, as well as security risks, prevented her from visiting Kosovo for a long period. Her son was on his military service in Bosnia when the war started in post-communist Yugoslavia. Risking his own life, her husband managed to locate and bring their son back home. It was a period of high stress for everyone in her family. She works as a nurse in a hospital in Resen; she also

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helps others in the family in various agricultural activities. The interview was conducted on January 21, 2005, at her house, in the presence of her husband.

Mannka is a woman in her 40s, a wife and mother of two. She was born in a village in the Albanian part of the Prespa region. At the age of seven she moved with her family to the family house of her maternal grandfather in another village in the area, not far from her place of origin. There she finished her primary and secondary education and then was employed in the accounting office of the local cooperative. Soon after, she married a man from another village in the same area on the western shore of Greater Prespa Lake, some 15 km from her former place of residence. She moved to her husband's family house, but retained the position at the cooperative; she commuted to work every working day despite the bad road and the poor public transport connecting the two villages; it was not possible to own a private car at that time in Albania. After the collapse of the Albanian communist regime in 1991, the collectives were closed down and in 1993 she lost her job, as did many others in the area. Ever since, most of the men in the area, including her husband, are seeking jobs in the neighboring countries, mostly Macedonia and Greece. With her husband and children being away for the most of the year (working, studying abroad), she shoulders the burdens of managing the household and family affairs, including small-scale agricultural production, mostly for household consumption. In 2000, together with few other women from the village, she established a non-governmental organization with the mission of supporting the women and children in the village. Since 2000, the organization has implemented a number of projects in the village, including reconstruction of the local kindergarten and infirmary and a project of solid waste management, all financed by international development organizations. The interview was conducted on December 5, 2004, at her house.

Naum is a man in his late 60s, father of five and a grandfather. He was born to a poor family with six male children in a village in the Albanian part of the Prespa region situated on the western shore of Greater Prespa Lake. While he was doing his compulsory military service his parents arranged a marriage for him with a family which did not have male descendants. With this arrangement he moved to his wife's family house in the neighboring village, also situated on the lakeshore. From his early years he was a shepherd for goats, sheep and cattle, first for the cooperative, and after the fall of the communist regime for his own family. Dissatisfied with the income as a shepherd at the cooperative, during communist times he had briefly tried other jobs, such as being a logger in the regional branch of the state forestry enterprise and a laborer in the cooperative. Since the fall of the communist regime in Albania he has been breeding his own cattle and logging firewood (illegally) in nearby Prespa National Park for his own consumption. The interview was conducted on December 2, 2004, at his house, which he shares with one of his sons, who is married and has one child.

Pettko is a man in his mid-70s. He lives in the same village as Militsa, in the northwestern part of the Prespa region in Macedonia. His mother died when he was eight; his grandmother, aunt, and, later, stepmother brought him up. He became a tailor and for a couple of years worked in a tailor's shop in the nearby town of Resen. Soon after he got married Pettko decided to emigrate to Sweden, taking his wife and two sons with him. When his wife died in a plane crash six years later, his main concern was the future of his children. Guided by the goal to "find a mother" for his small children and raise them into competent, moral, and self-sufficient adults, he returned to his homeland. Within a year he married a woman who had been divorced by her former husband on the grounds of sterility. He returned to Sweden, taking his

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second wife and his sons and continued his career as a factory worker. In the meantime his second wife bore him a daughter. He and his wife did not leave Sweden before his sons became independent and got married. Once this goal was achieved, taking his wife and daughter with him, he returned to his home village and looked after his elderly parents. Being a tailor, he first started a tailor's shop in his village, but soon abandoned it and continued as a farmer. Nonetheless, money was not the primary reason for Pettko to run his own business; he earned enough in Sweden to be financially independent and enjoy his life in the place where he feels at home. His sons and grandchildren still live in Sweden, but pay him visits regularly, usually in the summer. The interview was conducted on January 21, 2005, at the old family house built by his grandfather where he lives with his wife.

Zoran is a single male in his early 30s. He lives in a village in the northern part the Prespa region in Macedonia. He is one of two children – he has a brother; his father was psychologically disabled and his mother died when he was seven. His grandmother was seriously ill and bed-ridden for many years; it was he, his brother, and his grandfather who took care of her. She died when he was fourteen. Zoran condemns his father for being irresponsible and often cruel to his wife and children. His grandfather was responsible for bringing up him and his brother. After his grandfather died he and his brother divided his property so that Zoran stayed with his father in the old family house; in return, he agreed that his brother would get a larger portion of the land and some help from Zoran to build his own house. After he graduated from the high school of agriculture in Resen and did his army service his main goal was to emigrate to the USA, where he planned to stay with an aunt or uncle; all his attempts failed, however. In the mean time, he got employment in a local factory producing nylon packaging, but soon resigned because of the poor salary and

health problems caused by hazardous emissions from the production process. He is proud of being an educated farmer and has started his own small-scale apple production. He also earns money by working as a laborer on nearby farms, but his overall income is barely enough for his basic daily needs. This poverty hampers his plans to get married and establish his own family. The interview was conducted on July 28, 2005, at his house, which he shares with his father.

Gotse is a single male in his late 20s. He was born in a suburb of Skopje. At the age of seven he moved with his family to the family house of his maternal grandfather in a village in the northeastern part of the Macedonian Prespa region. He studied mechanical engineering in Skopje. Even before he graduated, he was planning to emigrate to the USA and make a career as a mechanical engineer. After all of his attempts to get a visa failed he turned to farming. He also runs a small shop, located near his house, which he shares with his parents. The interview was conducted on July 6, 2005, at his house.

Alexandar is an 18 year-old man from the same village as Militsa and Pettko; he was born there and lives there together with his parents, a younger sister, and paternal grandmother. He is a student at the technical faculty in the neighboring city of Bitola, and hopes to graduate in information technology; computers are his hobby and passion. His best friend is from Sweden; because the father of Alexandar's friend was born in the village he visits the village regularly – almost every summer. Alexandar is very much looking forward to visiting Sweden upon his graduation; he also plans to emigrate to Sweden or some other Western European country. Although his plans are to pursue a professional career abroad, he would like to build his own

house in the village and visit it on a regular basis. The interview was conducted on January 22, 2005, at his parents' house.

Vladimir is a single male in his late 20s. He was born in the town of Resen, the administrative center of the Macedonian part of the Prespa region. He completed his primary and secondary education in Resen and then graduated in environmental engineering in Skopje. Soon after graduation he joined an international project concerning the management of the transboundary Prespa basin, implemented by an international organization. His office is in Resen, but he often travels to the country office of the organization in Skopje. After the project ends he plans to leave the city of Resen and move to Skopje and perhaps make an international career in the field of environmental management. The interview was conducted on December 15, 2008, in a pub in Resen.

Stoyan is a man in his mid-70s. He lives in the same village as Militsa, Pettko, and Alexandar. Stoyan was a teenager when he joined the partisans during the Second World War. First he provided logistical support to the movement in the village and the Prespa region. Later, in 1944, he joined a combat unit and fought against the fleeing German army and its local Albanian allies, contributing to the liberation of many cities in Macedonia and Yugoslavia. In the aftermath of the war he was repeatedly offered the chance to stay in the army as a professional officer. The idea of becoming a professional soldier did not appeal to him and Stoyan decided to return home. His professional career was primarily connected with the construction industry; for short terms he also held the posts of a general manager ("president" of a small collective farm) and a public official (in the local organization of the communist party); in his spare time he was a farmer. After retirement he continued working as a farmer. The

interview was conducted on January 20, 2005, at his house, where he lives with his wife.

Lidia is a married woman in her late 20s. She was born in the town of Resen. She completed her primary and secondary education in Resen and then graduated in environmental engineering in Skopje. Soon after graduation she was employed by the local administration in Resen. The interview was conducted on December 15, 2008, in a pub in Resen.

Hrysto is a man in his early 50s, a husband and father of two sons; he was born and lives in the same village as Militsa, Pettko, Stoyan, and Alexandar. He finished primary school in his home village. Because Hrysto's father was chronically ill, from his early teenage years he helped his parents with the chores in the household, such as tending the cattle, and also earned money by collecting and selling firewood. Later he was employed in a textile factory in Resen. After Hrysto completed his obligatory military service in the Yugoslav army he traveled to Austria, from where he was hoping to get a visa to emigrate to the USA and stay with his sister. He stayed in Vienna for some 2 years, working various low-paying jobs; in his free time he played soccer in several amateur clubs in Vienna. Because his plan was to emigrate to the USA he declined offers to join a professional club in Germany. When he returned to his home village, he got another job in the textile industry in Resen and for several years enjoyed his life as a bachelor. He suddenly decided to marry a girl from another village in the Prespa region who also worked in the same factory, without getting proper consent from her parents. He is very proud of his wedding ceremony, which was, in his judgment, one of the greatest in his village, not least because it followed all the traditional customs. He and his wife stayed with his

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parents in a house built mainly by his mother. In the following years they had two boys; at the age of seven his older son fell ill with diabetes and since then regularly takes insulin shots. During mid-1990s he and his wife both lost their jobs in the textile factory; since then they make their living from agricultural production. In the beginning they produced mainly milk and meat, but recently apples have become their main product. His father died in 1997 and his mother soon afterwards, within a year. He is hoping that his younger son, who is a single man in his late 20s, will manage to emigrate to Canada and inherit the property of his childless sister. His older son, a single man in his early 30s, shall stay in the village and take care of the family property and also of Hrysto and his wife in their later lives. The interview was conducted on January 24, 2005, at his house.

Except for Fatime, and Militsa, all the participants are ethnic Macedonians of Christian Orthodox faith. Fatime is an ethnic Albanian of Muslim faith; Militsa is an ethnic Serbian of Christian Orthodox faith.

The analysis in the following sections draws on evidence from all the participants' interviews; however, the extracts that follow were taken from 11 out of 15 participants only. An overview of all the participants in this phase of the research project is presented in the previous chapter.

4.2. *Mapping the self through the family*

Representations of the self in connection to place involve a process whereby participants situate themselves, through the family, in the social world, both spatially and historically. Two concepts are central to understanding the ways the family moderates the person-place relationship: *family identity* and *family role*.

The interrelated themes of family and work/occupation provide ample evidence that relationships with family members and the nature of those relationships contribute significantly to participants' sense of self. This is reflected in the fact that the family is a salient theme in eleven of the fifteen interviews conducted in the first stage of the research; this theme was dominant in the talk of four participants. This section first focuses on how these participants use the family theme to talk about the self and place and make certain identity claims. There is considerable variation in the ways the participants conceptualize the family. The term family, as used by participants, denotes a nuclear family and an extended family, as well as a family lineage or genealogical ties. Who is regarded as family can also depend on the narrative context.

The ties to family members help the participants locate themselves in the social environment. In other words, the family is an important way to map one's own location, place or position with reference to various groups and categories of people. The following discussion demonstrates how the family integrates participants' sense of location in society, history, and space through the concept of place. A particularly good example of this is found in Fatime's talk. She began her talk by explaining where she comes from and who she is related to:

Extract 1

I was born in the village of Vapila in 1928. I originate from a farming family, a family with progressive ideas, since the past, the distant past. My father was a very progressive man. He was a very open man, very hospitable and highly appreciated in the village, both from the Albanians and the Macedonians even more so. He always held the village together

as a family. I cannot think of any misunderstanding or conflicts between

the Macedonians and the Albanians, from then up to the present.

This extract suggests that Fatime perceives herself in terms of the social categories she belongs to, primarily the family and the community of Vapila. The interlinked construction of the particular identities of her family and her village of origin emphasizes her specific position in the community as a member of a family with "progressive ideas." It is an esteemed position, as Fatime clearly states: "highly appreciated in the village." Importantly, this honored position or status is highly political and specifically connected to the interethnic relations between the ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, not only in her village of origin, but also in contemporary Macedonian multiethnic society.

The quality of the interethnic relations in her village and the important contributions that her family, her father in particular, made to them in the past is the overarching theme in her talk. Before Second World War her father served as the headman (*komet*, *kmet*) of the village, playing an important role in the maintenance of interethnic harmony in the village, as indicated in the extract above taken from the introductory section of Fatime's talk. Following this introduction she goes on to tell numerous stories in which her father demonstrates outstanding leadership, diplomacy, and wisdom in resolving and preventing conflicts within the community and also with neighboring communities and the central government.

Her father was not an exception, however, but rather a successor in the long-standing tradition of his ancestors in safeguarding and maintaining the interethnic relations in the village. This was achieved not only through mediating conflicts, but also through creating a sense of community where the two dominant ethnic groups

established mutual respect for the other group's cultural and religious traditions and helped each other in conducting their everyday affairs. This legacy has been, as she suggests, passed on from generation to generation, maintaining the unique identity of the village as a place where Muslim ethnic Albanians and Orthodox Christian ethnic Macedonians have lived together in harmony and peace since the distant past:

> ### *Extract 2*
>
> In my area, I can say, not even one murder has taken place between Macedonians and Albanians or a quarrel, or that was rare.... I see here[3] they lack a relationship among them. I wonder now. Those over there are humans and so are these here – but there is a tradition there.

Place identity, as the extract above demonstrates, is constructed through the interplay of similarity and difference with other places. In this context, place denotes both the community (of Vapila and of Skopje) and the location (in Vapila and Skopje). This difference, according to Fatime, is a product of accumulated history whereby the family identity and place identity are mutually constitutive. Closely intermingling family history and community history, is a way of asserting the congruence between family and place.

The concomitant construction of place identity and family identity is critical to the articulation of Fatime's place-based self-identity. Relationships with family members contribute significantly to Fatime's sense of self, thereby completing the congruence between the self and place. This is evident from her detailed account of the events leading to her personal and conscious commitment to the family values. She first explained how her father played an important role in the maintenance of the

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[3] She refers to Skopje where the interview was conducted at her home.

integrity of the family during the Second World War when different members of the extended family allied themselves with opposing armies and regimes. It was an opposition, in Fatime's view, between the reactionary nationalists (occupation regimes of fascist Albania and Bulgaria) and progressive communists (Tito's partisans). During the war her uncle chose the former and her brothers and her father chose the latter. Her mother, as Fatime vividly explained, had no other choice but to obey them:

Extract 3

My father died in 1946. When dying he made us promise. I and my mother stood in front of him. He died saying... "Wife," he said, "I command you. If anyone from the government, anyone comes, whatever they order, you are going to be the first to obey." My mother replied, "A woman without a headscarf, how can I speak in the front of the villagers, me telling them?" "I am saying this to you. You are going to be the first, going to war if needed," he said, "together with the girls, with the children."

The values and attitudes held by her father were gradually espoused by all his descendants, including Fatime and her mother, and eventually validated through their personal commitment to the ideology of communism. Extract 4 illustrates how the values, beliefs, and attitudes proclaimed by the communists eventually became part of Fatime's personal identity.

Extract 4

Now somebody tells me, somebody having other beliefs, that, "everybody has turned upside-down, but you want to persist." So, I

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reply, "I cannot now, at this age, pretend to be dimwitted and obey somebody and endorse the thieves and thugs and criminals. That is a shame to me." So, I said, "Now, at the end of my life I am going to remain, not become other [than I am]." Our idea was that you remain loyal forever.

Fatime, therefore, maintains as part of herself a sense of belonging and commitment to a social group – the communists.

Communist ideology is congruent, as she presents it, with the traditional values espoused by her "progressive family." For Fatime, communism was a "humane" and "progressive" ideology because it treated all human beings equally, regardless of class, gender or ethnic origin, in particular. As she notes, "it was an ideology where there was no jealousy, there was no egoism. If we are going to possess things, then we shall all possess them. If we are going to lack them, we shall all lack them. That was the motto during the war and it remained so afterwards." Her emotions are high when recollecting her experience as a volunteer in the labor brigades organized by the communist party that engaged in the construction of public infrastructure. Young people of all the nationalities and religious orientations of Yugoslavia participated but, as she stresses, "nobody was called by his/her name, it was he-comrade or she-comrade" and when after work they were dancing the hora, "there were everyone, male and female." That was the first time Fatime left the Prespa region and met new, different, people. In Fatime's view, communism brought about "general progress" in society.

The general progress brought about by Tito's communist regime, in Fatime's understanding, erased the boundaries that stratified the society based on ethnicity,

religion, class, and gender. Although Fatime does not focus specifically on gender, she implicitly endorses the idea of gender equality that was promoted by communism. However, her talk reveals a striking contradiction between traditional family values and the progressive ideas of communism with respect to gender issues. The numerous episodes from her life, family history, and community activities convey a consistent presentation of her father as a competent, wise, tactful, and generous 'head of the family' invested with enormous power relative to that of other members of Fatime's family, the female members in particular. Early in her interview she portrayed her father as a progressive, non-religious man, but it was not until the episode about his death that she specifically mentions his dissociation from the traditional position of women in the society, as strongly suggested in Extract 3. This was a turning point in Fatime's construction of her family identity at which its members were freed from the reactionary legacy of the cultural traditions in her community of origin such as gender inequality. What is preserved, however, is the tradition of interethnic tolerance and mutual respect between the different ethnic groups in her village of origin. The episode concerning the death of her father successfully resolves the contradictions related to the emphasis on traditions and returns coherence to her talk, in which the quality of the interethnic relations in her village and the important contributions that her "progressive family" made to them is the overarching theme.

In summary, family history and political ideology structure the logic for a connection between place and identity. The notion of family maps the connections between place and self-identity over extended periods of time, providing a continuity of the past into the future. Importantly, this construction of self-identity and place, and in particular the prominent role of ideology, is closely related to the present time. The interview was conducted 4 years after the bloody conflict between ethnic

Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia. The fighting was confined to the northern and western parts of Macedonia; there were no serious incidents in Prespa. When the conflict started, the government was led by the right-wing parties of ethnic Macedonians (VMRO-DPMNE[4]) and ethnic Albanians in Macedonia (DPA[5]) – ideological opponents of the SDSM,[6] the successor of the Macedonian Communist Party.

This discussion convincingly showed that the family mediates the connection between self-identity and place. The person born to a group of people such as the family, but also a community and an ethnic group, acquires a particular identity. The discussion above argues that family membership is an important concept that locates the individual in the social environment. As mentioned earlier, the family provides the person with a sense of belonging and a sense of location in the social world. Moreover, the identification with the family can serve as a means of social demarcation. In the case of Fatime, the family identity is also, to a degree, a marker of social status in the sense of the notion as originally articulated by Max Weber: "positive or negative estimation of social honor" (Gerth and Mills 1946, p. 187). Most of all, the construction of family identity in Fatime's talk is a springboard to articulating a distinctly political claim. The establishment of the Republic of Macedonia as a democratic state was followed by a revival of nationalism and a burgeoning of ethnocentric political parties. In Fatime's understanding, these developments fostered the interethnic military conflict in 2001. Her identification with the "progressive" political left, the communist party and communist ideology, is the

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[4] VMRO-DPMNE stands for Vnatreshna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija – Demokratska Partija za Makedonsko Nacionalno Edinstvo [*Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation– Democratic party of Macedonian National Unity*].
[5] DPA stands for Demokratska Partija na Albancite [*Democratic Party of Albanians*].
[6] SDSM stands for Socijaldemokratski Sojuz na Makedonija [*Social Democratic Alliance of Macedonia*].

next step in her social demarcation. In this context, the construction of her place-based self-concept is ultimately political.

The commitment to and the identification with social groups at various scales, from family and community to the region and beyond, indicates one dimension of self-identity – collective identity or a collective sense of self. At the same time, as Extract 4 clearly shows, she expresses a firm sense of self, that is, personal or individual identity. Thus, the particular identity Fatime constructs in her talk is simultaneously individual and collective. She achieves congruence between individual and collective identity through the idea of continuity. The idea of continuity provides for a personal sense of continuity over time, but also for a firm sense of continuity in family and society, ultimately precipitating a distinct place-based self-identity.

The discussion above makes a strong argument that the relationships with family members contribute significantly to participants' sense of self. The nature of those relationships is also important. For instance, in her talk, Fatime makes no reference to her husband and the members of his family (or his ancestors). Also, the members of the maternal family are mentioned only in the context of the renunciation of their "religious fanaticism." In other words, who is regarded as family depends on the narrative context. The family in Fatime's talk is "constructed" in a way that highlights the family relations that corroborate the particular identity presented in her talk. More specifically, the relationships with family members defined through blood are used selectively in her narrative construction of place-based self-identity. Going over the larger body of interview data it becomes evident that, indeed, there is choice and flexibility in how speakers use the notion of family and family lineage to construct a plausible relationship to place.

In the beginning of this discussion it was noted that Fatime began her presentation to the researcher by explaining where she comes from and who she is related to. The analysis that followed showed how these two identifiers are connected to the notion of a progressive family – family identity. It has also been shown that family identity was essential for the congruence between the self and place and for the construction of place-based self-identity in Fatime's talk. Yet, the relationship between the self and place through family is wide open to a variety of interpretations. This is particularly evident in the talk of participants with attachments in multiple places and/or families, such as the case of Militsa.

The idea of progress is also implied in Militsa's recollection of her first encounter with the village where she currently lives. This new place of residence was in stark contrast to her place of origin: surrounded by mountains, it lacked the hospitality of the plains she was used to; instead of mechanical equipment she saw poor farmers using primitive tools; there were dirt roads instead of asphalt; faraway wells instead of an in-house water supply; her father-in-law was as strict and diligent as her father, but enforced "strange" traditional customs and norms, though the religious faith of the families was the same. The particular way that Militsa emphasizes the differences between her place of birth and her new place of residence is highly relevant for her construction of self-identity. Fatime and Militsa use the idea of the progressive farming family in the construction of place-based self-identity in similar ways. After Militsa married, however, this link between self-identity, family identity, and place identity could no longer be maintained. Militsa's self-concepts related to the idea of progress and the related social status, however, are still evident: "By the neighbors and the teacher, anybody, I was praised very much, for the high hygiene of my children, for them going to school in clean clothes." Here again, the

idea of a progressive (modern) person provides for a personal sense of continuity over time, regardless of the associations with place. For Militsa, however, this did not contribute to a sense of belonging to her new place of residence. The family is nevertheless still critical for Militsa's relationship with her new place – through her own family – as she clearly states: "I was entirely devoted to my children and they have been my happiness in my life and they have bound me to survive here, to stay."

For Militsa, the sense of location and belonging is most prominent in connection with home, as indicated by her idea of "warm home." For Militsa, the home is as a locus of intimate family relations (among parents, children, and siblings), a place endowed with positive feelings: "Thank God, I have a warm home, I have children, grandchildren ... that's the most beloved to me in my life." The "warm home" she established in the village became an important anchor for Militsa in developing her relationship with the new place of residence. Over time her connections to the place grew stronger with the new family ties established through her grandchildren, and also through participation in place-bound ways of life. Nonetheless, there is no indication of congruence between the self-identity and place to the extent that a place-based self-identity emerges, as is the case of Fatime.

The frequent references Militsa makes to home and family ties place great importance on her conventional domestic roles, which, in turn, has consequences for her self-identity. In other words, the construction of self-identity is connected primarily with her gendered family roles, subordinating all (other) identities, for instance, an identity of a successful working woman. Arguably, by doing this she was able to achieve a high degree of (thematic) coherence in her narrative construction of self-identity, that is, individual episodes bear on one another and the whole talk. This

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evidence is quite similar to that of Fatime in that the family theme conveys the gist of who she is and what her biography is about. Militsa, however, employs this theme to convey a very different self-image.

Like any interview data, the extracts presented above have many aspects which could be commented on. My particular focus in this section was on how the participants use the family theme to talk about their everyday life experience in relation to place. The interviews in which the family theme recurred were analyzed as a single body of data. Two patterns were found across the data: the first links self-identity, family identity, and place. The second reveals a relationship between self-identity, family roles, and place. The discussion above presented rich evidence from participants' talk specifically concerning the significance of family identity in the presentation of the self as related to place. But, as the case of Militsa already indicated, the notions of family roles can be also important in person-place relationships.

The construction and expression of identity in participants' talk often involved what De Fina (2003) called "the projection of the self into specific social roles" (p. 8). Following Blumer (1969, p. 75), the term "social role" is used to denote the way the participants interpreted and handled the topic of interaction – in this case the presentation of personal experience in a place. The differentiation of social roles in the larger body of interview data is usually expressed along the traditional images of domestic (family) roles: the man as the breadwinner and the woman as the full-time homemaker wife. The following extract, taken from Mannka's talk, is a case in point.

Extract 5

I do not want to excuse myself, but we, as women, are burdened. Men are also tired, they have their own burdens; their burden is heavier. We are dependent on them. I can speak of myself, of my family, made up of four members, due to the hard work of my husband, working abroad, and working so hard in order to sustain me as a wife and two children.

For Mannka, "the rural life" for women is a full-time job in itself. Women have multiple domestic roles: wife, mother, housekeeper, but also farm laborer, doing everything that is left to be done, including heavy physical chores when the husband is away (for the most of the year). After the fall of the communist regime in Albania, jobs in the former state enterprises (mainly agriculture cooperatives) were no longer available. This alone triggered dramatic changes in the social and spatial organization of work in the region. Like many others, both women and men, Mannka lost her job. Due to the poor state of the economy in the region, many of the men from the area fill seasonal and temporary jobs abroad, primarily in neighboring Macedonia, Greece, and Italy. With few employment opportunities and their husbands being away from home for most of the year, women in this rural area are bound to home and domesticity, simultaneously responsible for herding animals, collecting firewood, acquiring fodder, cultivating crops, maintaining and harvesting gardens, child care, cooking, and cleaning. Mannka is fully committed to supporting her husband, children, and farm; her husband has the task of earning enough money to educate their children and buying what she cannot produce on the farm.

Although recognizing her dependency on her husband's cash income, Mannka rejects the idea of being subordinate to her husband. Men and women play

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complementary roles in the household, according to Mannka. The multiple roles of women, as Mannka presents it, are part of their family responsibilities, and they are highly gendered: men leave the home so they can earn cash to sustain the family while women are bound to the household. For Mannka the roles women (can) play are not limited to the realm of the home or household or family, but also include community life. After the breakdown of the communist regime in Albania, a small group of women in her village established a non-governmental organization to implement a number of projects for "the common interest," such as reconstructing the local nursing home and infirmary, the kindergarten, and developing infrastructure for the collection and disposal of solid waste. She is committed to improving the life in her community despite the obstacles and boycotts by other women in the community who hold a "different concept" of women's role in community life. Most of these community initiatives are driven by the vision of improving life, for future generations in particular, but also for the identity of her village. Her active participation in community life is another form of resistance against the idea that women are subservient to men.

In sum, Mannka subscribes to multiple identities brought out by various gendered roles (woman, wife, mother, homemaker, farmer, community activist) which reflect the multiplicity of her everyday lived experience inside the family and community and also the influences from processes operating extralocally. It is interesting to note that the construction of these identities is based upon a rural-urban dichotomy. In other words, the construction of identity by Mannka relies on such notions as "rural life," "rural people," and "rural place," as well as the opposite notions of "city life" and/or "urban places:"

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Extract 6

It is not as in the city. True, the urbanites have it differently. They rest more, could find easier jobs. …. Work is needed. You cannot, do not have time, to take a rest; to stop and decide now is the time to rest. But the city-dwellers, even in the middle of the day, may take a nap. But not us! We cannot, [we] need to work. That's the rural life.

In conclusion, these extracts suggest that gender roles and the corresponding identities are meaningful and articulated in the context of the everyday lived experience. The context of the everyday lived experience is place-based, as suggested by the notions of "rural life" and "rural people." More specifically, the connection between place and self-identity is maintained through the interrelated construction of gender identity and place identity. The use of phrases such as "we as women" or "as women" is strongly related to traditional ideas about gender differences.

The construction of gendered family roles is also evident in the male participants' talk. For them, the family theme often functions as a showpiece to display (or evaluate) their success, or, for that matter, failure, in fulfilling the role as "head of the family," responsible for the well-being of the family across generations. Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, when talking about themselves they assume that the interests of the family are of utmost importance.

For instance, Naum's family suffered extreme poverty during the period of communist Albania. Being uneducated and possessing no special qualifications, he could hope only for the least-paid jobs in the cooperative; at the same time, all other possibilities and private initiatives for earning additional income were sanctioned by the communist regime. There were not many options for him to cope with the poverty:

Extract 7

The family needed to be sustained. You need to bring some *leks*.[7] You would spend little, eat little, drink little, in order to bring something for the children.

Throughout his talk Naum constructs an identity as a person who struggled to secure the livelihood of his family. Some major decisions in his life have been guided by this sense of responsibility for the family. "We were six brothers and could not live in the village," he explains at the outset of the interview, "so I agreed to get married here." He moved to the house of his wife's parents in the neighboring village and assumed the responsibility of providing for his three-generation family. Expressions such as "I was nine souls," meaning the members of the extended family, "the family needs to be sustained," and "I raised my family with great difficulty" are central metaphors, providing strong coherence in Naum's talk.

Presenting the role of economic provider for the extended family functions as the principle evaluative framework or perspective for the events that enter into his narrative construction. In other words, the way Naum constructs and reconstructs his life history and experience convey the meaning of personal experience centered on his family role. Proficiency in economic provision is then essential to fulfilling the expectations for this particular (social) identity. The larger body of interview data collected from male speakers provides further evidence for the significant relationship between the construction of family role and self-identity. Pettko's talk provides particularly rich evidence of men's construction of the role of family provider.

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[7] Lek is the Albanian national currency

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Pettko's talk is a fascinating review of his own life and recollection of life-events that tell about the self. It should not be taken, however, as an objective reflection of his personal life, but rather as a performance, a presentation of his personal value system, of how he sees himself and wants others to see him. At the personal level, stability (continuity) and control in life are central concepts in his value system and self-identity. Summarizing his biographical account he concludes that there were no "complications," or "accidents" he could think of during his life. And his life was anything but void of complications and accidents. He lost his mother when he was only eight, lost his first wife early in the marriage, and more recently his stepmother has "betrayed him" and the relationship with his older son is highly strained. Perhaps, for Pettko, these events fall under a different category of phenomena (that one cannot control). What he could do, however, was to follow the traditional (cultural) norms and exercise wisdom ("very careful accounting") to avoid conflicts with or being stigmatized by others, the community of his village of origin in particular.

In Pettko's understanding, family comes ahead of the interests of any individual in it, himself included. He "sacrificed himself" for his children, never allowing them to be "naked," "hungry," and always staying with them. The performance of this self-evident and self-ascribed (social) role of self-sacrificing protector of the family clearly depends on his personal emphasis on stability and control. In practice, it meant earning enough money to sustain a satisfying personal and family life. Not surprisingly, to Pettko the material well-being of his family is the most important achievement of his life. This would explain why, when talking about the death of his wife, he goes to great lengths to explain the financial implications of the accident. He lost a large sum of cash; he had hidden it in the wife's bra in an

attempt to smuggle it through Swedish customs' control. Also, he explains how, following the accident, he and the children got financial support from the Swedish state.

In his capacity as "the pillar of the family" he is the "first to be asked about" all family affairs, such as the course of family life or the place of residence. For instance, for the sake of his family's future, and in the face of the "unpredictability of life," he initially decided to leave the village and, soon afterwards, to take his wife and children with him. Although he had "a good life" in his village, he decided to migrate with his family to Sweden because, as he emphasized, one needs to "account for everything, you have created a family and it is a must" and because "the life has no end." Interestingly, when asked to tell more details about his migration to Sweden, he recalls a photo attached to a letter his brother-in-law sent from Sweden. It was while holding a photo of his brother-in-law "dressed up," and his words in the letter, "life is over here," resonating in his mind that he decided to join him in Sweden. Also, among the reasons behind his (and his wife's) decision to return to the village the family stands out as a priority, as indicated in the following extract:

Extract 8

In '84 I was telling the general director "let me go away for two years. My elders are weak; they are very old and will run to ruin if there is nobody around."

Upon his return to the birthplace, Pettko started a tailor's shop because he was a trained tailor. The workshop was the only one of its sort, situated in a tiny building on the village square, the main public space of his community. Arguably, it was a symbol of his prestige. Land-ownership also commands high status and prestige for

Pettko. Despite his age and diminished physical strength, he takes due care of his land and uses every opportunity to buy a new parcel; land is, he notes, "capital" which "does not diminish" over time (compared to money). The ultimate goal is to convert and safeguard his personal wealth for the benefit of his children and grandchildren. In return, he expects the rest of the family to continue to respect him as the self-sacrificing protector of the family. In this context his grandfather is the model he follows and not his father, who "in fact didn't buy anything." The memories of his grandfather are particularly strong through the land and the family house that his grandfather built in 1903 with money he earned in the USA. The family house in particular symbolizes his connection to the past of his grandfather and his personal identity. He has also built a new modern house for his sons; it is still the largest and the most luxurious building in the village. He expects his sons to follow his and his grandfather's example and return to the village after they retire.

Naum's and Pettko's talks provide strong evidence that the rights and duties attached to the role of family provider (collective or social identity) define a person's identity. This is to say that the person's identity in the talks of these participants is predominantly defined in terms of the relationships with family members. The fulfillment of the social role of family provider is guided by a range of criteria and the achievement of social honor, that is, social status in the Weberian sense. The social status asserted through the family role can be essential to person's identity to the extent that is a necessary condition for a meaningful life. Zoran's talk is a powerful illustration of why family matters in the construction of identity. Zoran mentioned his plans for going abroad as a way to escape "the hopeless situation in the country," and his birthplace in particular, where "more than 80% of the people are poor." His ultimate goal is to establish his own family with someone he really loves. Moreover,

"achieving something in life," or "becoming a human" – in Zoran's words – is strongly bound to the idea of having a family:

Extract 9

I am already a 30-year-old and it is difficult for me to decide to get married. It is the problem of poverty. And when I will become a family, how am I going to feed that family? It is a question of existence: in what way will I work to make money so the life can go on? As a single man I manage somehow to get along, but then it would be harder. These are my thoughts and those are the problems, because I have to fix some things at home. And that's hard. And, in a way, I am still thinking of going abroad so that I can achieve something in life.

Zoran's talk adds weight to the argument that the family plays significant role in the congruence between a person's identity and place and that individuals seek out places that match their identity. For Zoran, being successful in life is rendered meaningful through the construction of his role as a successful father or head of the family, as indicated in the Extract 9: "How am I going to feed that family?" The extent to which participants view themselves as worthwhile or successful in life can also depend on other social roles a person can assume, such as being a successful professional. For most of the male participants interviewed at this stage of the research, having, or for that matter not having, a well-paid job is one of the central issues in the construction of identity.

The significance of occupation tends to be more important for the participants who have higher levels of education. Gotse's talk is a case in point. His discontent with his current status as a farmer and unfulfilled aspirations to work abroad as a

mechanical engineer reveals the incongruence between self-identity and place. For Gotse, the "ideal conditions for living" and "becoming what he is" depend on some other, imagined, place:

Extract 10

I was really hoping … to go there [USA], to a secure job, to a job from the aspect of what you are, from a scientific base, do you understand? What you have studied for. That was a real trauma and tragedy in life, for not making it. Let us say, when I go there I will not be a farmer. I would not struggle so much with heavy weights, on the contrary, I will continue to deepen science.

While serving his military service in his early twenties, Gotse suffered serious and irreversible damages to his spine that prevent him from hard physical labor. "It is a real tragedy," he says, to see this happen "to such a young man, a farmer above all." After his hopes for emigrating to the States and a career as a mechanical engineer were dashed, he was "sentenced to a life as a farmer." His disappointment was profound because he had hoped for quite a different life-style. He finds himself displaced in the place of his heritage and familial rootedness. It is "a life question," he says, "it is about being a human or, so to speak, an animal." This creates a serious complication in how he presents his self-identity. There is a wide gap between what he was hoping for, as referred to in Extract 6, and what he had to become, forced to remain in his village, living as a farmer. He denigrates the latter. This discrepancy between his aspirations, related to distant places, and the bitter reality of his actual place is a source of an ambivalent, if not negative, relationship between place and self-identity.

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Issues concerning work and occupation also played significant role in the narrative construction of self-identity in Mannka's talk. At the very beginning of the talk Mannka recollects episodes from her early childhood, presenting her as more successful than her closest friend with whom she used to tend sheep: "After I finished high school, they employed me. So I turned out to be smarter – I told you – than my friend. They employed me in the office, as an accountant." Indeed, elsewhere she shows how proud she is of her former career, in particular her job position as an accountant in the cooperative. The fall of the communist regime and the concomitant dissolution of the collective left her jobless. One may credibly assume that these events had significant consequences for her self-identity. Nonetheless, throughout the interview she maintains the image of an individual with self-esteem. For one thing, she is confident in asserting that each individual is responsible for and the creator of his own reality:

Extract 11

I worked as a supervisor for nine years, in the office. I worked as a clerk. And then, in 1993, the cooperative disintegrated. Then the land was distributed and everyone, according to his abilities and knowledge, is sucking life. Isn't that so? Each individually, according to their capacity and skills. It is the way.

Issues concerning work and occupation played significant roles in the narrative construction of self-identity in one out of four women participating at this stage of the research. It has to be emphasized, however, that the patterns observed may be due to the size and the structure of the sample (dominated by rural male participants). Also, the discussion above showed that self-concepts are related to

participant's beliefs about their personal skills and abilities. Nonetheless, the discussion in this section offers convincing evidence that gender crucially structures and organizes a participant's evaluation and presentation of personal experience in a place. The examples above also show that the ideas of gender and family are intertwined and affect each other reciprocally. The construction of family roles is the most salient outcome of this interaction in participants' talk. Participants' recollection of personal experience in a place shows how gender is constructed and maintained in everyday life through such activities as divisions of labor or allocation of tasks among family members. The numerous examples presented in this section clearly show that gender configures the relationships between family members in imbalanced ways that precipitate a hierarchy of access to property, power, and prestige and ultimately inequality. In other words, the construction and maintenance of gendered family relations and the resulting gendered family roles structure a family as a social group. This has effects beyond the family, however.

As the title of this section reveals, the family is an important concept, though not the only one, which locates the individual in the social environment. There are two important ways in which the family situates the participants in this research in the social world. When individuals identify themselves with family members, with the family as a group, they can assume the identity of that social group – family identity. When participants identify themselves with family roles they assume gender identities. The hierarchy and inequality of gender relations in the family is also reflected in family identity – usually men are the bearers of family identity.

The positioning of participants within the society through the family therefore implies different social statuses for women and men. Importantly, although women

may recognize they are subordinate to men this does not necessarily mean that they are subservient. There is general consent and acceptance among both the women and men participating in this research of the ways in which gender relations are constructed and maintained through family roles. In other words, family roles are important to identity and the adequate performance of family roles contributes significantly to participants' self-identity. Men, however, tend to base their self-evaluation more on success in the occupational sphere.

The examples presented in this section demonstrated how complex social relations among family members provide the participants with collective identities and how they can contribute significantly to participants' self-identity. The domesticated space of the family is therefore an important setting, though not the only one, where these identities are expressed and maintained through the routines and practices of everyday life. This is clearly captured in participants' ideas of "family house," "warm home," and familial rootedness, where the spatiality or materiality of the home or the house embeds and is a repository of life experiences, personal memories, and family history. As a result, the home can provide the person with a sense of belonging and a sense of location not only in society, but also in space (place) and time (history).

4.3. Matching the self and place

The discussion above demonstrated how the differing notions of the family were employed creatively in the narrative construction of place-based self-identity. Following these observations, the previous section noted that the relationship between the self and place is unstable and often also ambivalent. This section explores this point further and shows that the relationship between the self and place can also

change over the course of life. This is evident in the talk of a number of participants, but the following extracts, taken from Alexandar's talk, offer some initial clues.

Throughout his talk, Alexandar conveys a strong sense of connectedness, an affective association with his village, which has become integrated into his self-identity as indicated by a number of 'I' statements regarding the place. His relationships with this place are not, however, unambiguous and lacking contradictions. For instance, Alexandar is not ready to easily forego some of the opportunities faraway places may offer him:

Extract 12

I don't think there is another village matching Seltse; I am so attached to it and would not trade it for any other, leave it and live somewhere else, another place. Well, with the financial situation, as it unfolds, I am currently thinking of… I have often thought that I would finish the university and continue my education in some other place.

Being in his early adulthood, Alexandar is passing through a period in his life course during which elements of self-identity and his future are explored and formed. This is the stage where he is beginning to consolidate a sense of identity through active experimentation with new values, roles, and images of self; work and career choice are central to his identity project. For example, he is committed to education and getting a job "according to the faculty." In Alexandar's identity project, international emigration is the way to attain a higher social status through education, occupation, and higher income.

He is aware that the pursuit of a professional career may lead him away from the safety of his community and home and into faraway places of which he has only a

vague sense. Among these Sweden stands out, a place he knows of mainly through the stories of some fellow villagers, most notably his best friend Denis, who lives in Sweden. Alexandar's plan to leave his birthplace as a temporary move and return to it in due course resembles the life-course of many fellow villagers, especially males. Among them, Pettko, who is also the grandfather of Alexandar's best friend – Denis – probably serves as a model.

With the help of his friend's family, he is hoping to emigrate to Sweden once he graduates from the technical university. Alexandar hopes to continue his education in Sweden and make a professional career. Ultimately, he is looking forward to the possibility of staying abroad, in which case he "will be coming back non-stop," because "the things he has experienced" in the village "will never be forgotten." Elsewhere in the interview he anticipates a return to the village at some point in the future and building a house, to "put his life in order," and become independent from his parents, because, as he puts it, he is "already a grown-up." Alexandar has developed a strong, positive emotional bond to his village which explains his commitment to maintain a future residence in the village and also his remorse over moving out.

The propensity for migration is strongest among the younger male participants. The elder participants also recollect episodes of emigration, actual or intended, in their early adulthood. Separation from home places via (international) emigration is an expression of independence in young male adults, of maintaining control over one's life, as suggested by Alexandar above. The propensity for migration is, however, countered by the gravitational pull of the family, community, and birthplace. There is a struggle among young adult participants to find a balance

between autonomy and attachment. Vladimir's talk offers additional evidence on the rationales and emotions involved in this struggle.

The town of Resen is Vladimir's birthplace and a temporary place of residence: "I am here, for the moment, most of all because of … the current working contract." Being a small place, he argues, it has advantages and disadvantages. The intimate "social ties," with friends, kin and family, he argues, guarantee support at any time. On the negative side, Vladimir mentions poor prospects for employment and a lack of opportunities to interact with different people and thus expand one's worldview, knowledge, and experience. These are the main reasons why he is planning to leave Prespa. Indeed, if there had not been an emotional attachment to this place he would have been gone long ago:

Extract 13

I work on something that I studied for. A profession which is relatively well paid, for our situation. In the past period I had plans to go abroad, there were some offers. But some things interfered. I think it was because I've got an intimate connection with this place.

For Vladimir, the professional approach to his work has maximum priority. Through his professional commitment to sustainable development Vladimir hopes he will contribute to improvement of people's life in the Prespa region. Although he respects and has good relations with the locals, he withdraws both socially and emotionally: "It doesn't make me feel I am part of them. I observe the events here from a distance." It is his past rather than the present that accounts for his commitment to the place:

Extract 14

Inside me, I think, I am paying back to this place for how I have grown
up, what I have become, here. This place, you know, has contributed to
my personal development and what I am doing now for it, in a way, is
payback. I am generally satisfied with what I have become, growing up
here, being brought up by incorporating those basic values that guide you
in the rest of your life.

Vladimir is surprised by the fact that he had not thought about this issue before
the interview – about his connection to his place. Following his reflection during the
talk, the place he refers to cannot be easily grasped geographically. It is related to
Vladimir's personal involvement in a variety of geographically dispersed locations,
such as the home and the village where he used to spend the summers, staying with
his grandparents, the town of Resen, but also the beaches and campfires along the lake
shore, and other settings in the Prespa region.

Older as well as younger participants may still search to find a personally
meaningful way of life which connects the self and place. The older participants
recollected episodes that help them to evaluate their life as a whole. They interpreted
past achievements on the basis of cultural and personal values but also experience
within their places of current residence. In these narratives past achievements and
experiences were interpreted on the basis of present experience and needs within the
place. These narratives show that the way they see themselves is linked with how they
react to what is happening in the place. For instance, upon his return to his birth place
Pettko could finally enjoy the benefits of his material wealth, in an environment that
was congruent with his self-concepts. The current condition and the future of the

village is, however, a source of great disappointment and weariness at this point in his life. Interestingly, he states that his personal achievements and satisfaction cannot guarantee his well-being in a community that does not share the same condition. Pettko suggests that discontinuity and instability of the social and the biophysical environment of his birthplace affect personal well-being and self-identity. This relationship is even more prominent in Stoyan's talk.

Stoyan's talk stands out by its strong focus on career – few of the comments or episodes he recollected fall outside the focus on his professional career. His talk is a concise, brief chronicle of his career, from a partisan and soldier to a construction technician. It is an account of his decency and performance in whatever he did (soldier, construction worker, manager). Those were the reasons why there was always someone to offer him a job, be it the army, a state institution or a company. Yet, because of his low level of education (vocational training only), his earnings were always modest; currently he receives only a minimal pension payment. Notwithstanding the emphasis on career in the talk, his authority in the village is the most important source of his personal pride and satisfaction: "the government still counts on me. Because I was a great organizer for all sorts of affairs, elections, for instance! My word is appreciated in the village."

For Stoyan, his career is a source of personal pride and satisfaction that comes from his professional achievements, such as the roads "he" built. It was his decency; above all, having no "problems with the government," that has earned him appreciation and influence with both the government and the community. He always used his status and influence for the benefit of the village, by finding "employment for the village" in the town of Resen or organizing support from the government and

companies to develop public infrastructure in the village (electricity, roads, and telephone lines). The "authority" he enjoys in the community and in the local government is something that gives him "great satisfaction." Having made such progress: an asphalt road, electricity, telephone lines, his "village is very much satisfied."

Seltse is a powerful communicator of Stoyan's personal identity, as the examples presented above strongly suggest. For this participant Seltse is a repository of memorable and self-defining incidents and an expression of the social and cultural values that have shaped his self-identity. Yet, Stoyan's home village has recently undergone dramatic changes; since "the time of the socialism" (meaning after the fall of communism in Yugoslavia) the population of the village has been halved; there are now few children in the school in the village; no young people have parties at the community hall; the community hall is now reduced to ruins and many people have migrated to Resen or abroad. This is contrary to what he thinks the "modern age" should be about. The importance he attaches to his contribution to the progress in the village is countered by an ongoing trend where "everything is going to ruin." This certainly impacts his evaluation of past achievements and experience in the place which helped define his self-identity.

This discussion demonstrates that social bonds and local sentiments can be an important link between the individual and place. Indeed, for the majority of the participants local social ties are usually strong in promoting a local sense of belonging and place attachment. For the participants, "place" is primarily the local social environment; for the participants in this study the notions of place and community are often coterminous. Everyday living and social-interaction-in-place ground meanings

attached to the local biophysical environment, both man-made and natural. The built environment, for instance, serves as a significant repository of personal memories and thus its importance for self-identity. The participants mention built environments that are gathering places where people would meet and work toward shared goals or demonstrate shared beliefs. Public places, in particular, such as local churches, schools, village squares and community halls, ground personal and social experiences and meaning. For these reasons, rapid changes in the social and the biophysical environment of the place can threaten a participant's self-identity; they destabilize the meanings grounded in the participant's lifelong experience with the place.

Probing a little further, it becomes evident that person-place bonds may well be shaped by processes of identity formation, maintenance, and change during different stages of the lifespan. This can be illustrated by examples taken from Lidia's talk. For instance, Lidia recalls her parents' plans to emigrate to the States before she married and established her own family. While such plans have not been abandoned completely in her family, Lidia is "not ready to begin a new life." In addition she sees no compelling reason to change her place of residence: "I feel good here, at least for the moment… I feel I can achieve more here than there [the USA]."

The evidence presented above was predominantly based on interview data collected from male speakers. Although the sample of female participants is smaller in size, some comparison is still possible. The creation of their own family and a home appears to be most important to the relationship between place and the self in female participants' talk. For the women participating in this research this often involved moving away from home early in their adulthood. In consequence, these women can express dual and possibly ambiguous attachments to the family – the family of origin

and their own families. The case of Militsa is a telling example of the implications for the place-person relationships. The process of creating her own family would have been an easier project had there been stronger support from her family of origin. The relations with her family and place of origin were cut off not merely by distance, but also by the unfortunate events accompanying the breakdown of former Yugoslavia. This precipitated an ambiguous sense of belonging, or rather of not belonging either to her birth place or to her current place of residence:

Extract 15

What else I can tell about myself. That I came from faraway; I have nobody of my own. Thank God, I have a warm home, I have children, grandchildren. Well, that's the most beloved to me in my life, and the dearest. But, being lonely, it can be said, is difficult, without anybody. I do have [them]; I wish them life and health, to all and to mine, but they are faraway.

Leaving home and recreating it elsewhere is but one instance of the overall subordination of women and the dominance of men in the family. Gender differences, therefore, can have salient effects on the dynamics of person-place relationships discussed in this section.

In this chapter it has become clear that participants seek places that meet the expectations of different phases of their lifespans. At any stage of the *life course*, there is a degree of instability and ambiguity in the relationship between the self and place – a mismatch. The repeated mention of this issue in participants' talk reveals some important features of place-identity processes. First, there is a quest for places that match the self throughout the lifespan, although in some stages it can be more

prominent, such as in early adulthood. Early in adulthood there is a marked thrust for autonomy and personal development, whereas in later life the participants prefer stability. The relationship between the self and place entails an evaluation of the social and the biophysical environment according to subjective standards which in turn reflect self-conceptions. These subjective standards inform participants' sense of well-being or *quality of life*. Going through the larger body of interview data, it appears that participants' sense of well-being is related to objective and subjective terms such as work, finances, the natural environment, education, family life, the community, and friendships. It should also be noted that participants may give differing importance to various life domains over the life course. In conclusion, this section has demonstrated that representations of the self in connection to place involve a dynamic process whereby participants evaluate the congruence between self-identity and place. This evaluation is influenced by the events of the *life course* and is generally expressed in terms of well-being or quality of life.

4.4. *Reconfiguring the self and place*

The previous sections have repeatedly asserted that the participants make meaning of their place-bound experiences both as unique individuals and as social beings as defined by life stage, gender, and significant social relations within the family and community. These meanings situate the individual in a web of attachments to the family, community, and place which in turn can give rise to a place-based self-identity. These emotional bonds to family, community, and place do not, however, fix the self firmly in place – on the contrary, the person-place relationship is unstable and often ambiguous, as the discussion above demonstrated.

The memorable and self-defining, place-bound experiences participants mention in their talk very often take place in an outdoor setting. This section discussed narratives that are exemplary of the range of experiences recollected by almost all participants, both male and female, where the biophysical environment is relevant in various ways. Among these there is a sub-set of episodes where natural features and phenomena are involved in the action of the narrative and are explicitly relevant for its evaluation. There are many more examples in the second sub-set, where the biophysical environment is moved into the background and plays a role merely as a setting, a scene for the social interaction. For the purpose of the present discussion, the biophysical environment is conceived as including both the natural and the built environment. In these narratives participants display *stability* or *change* of the self through their engagement with the biophysical and social environment of place. These examples demonstrate how the interplay of change and stability affects both the sense of self and the meanings of place to the extent that the place-based self-identity is reinforced or, in some instances, significantly re-configured.

4.4.1. Enduring change

People remember and are able to narrate many episodes in their lives that are mundane and appear to have little relevance to their self-identity. However, this is not to say that such experiences are meaningless and disconnected from the self – quite the contrary. There are plenty of such episodes in the larger body of interview data, embedded in the larger narratives, which complement or restate the dominant narrative themes in the participants' talk. This sub-section discusses some of these and demonstrates that the self and place are negotiated through participants' everyday involvement with the social and biophysical environment.

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Mannka's talk provides a sequence of episodes about her personal qualities, perhaps those most relevant to her self-identity, which are also relevant for the present discussion. The story presented in the extract below is preceded by an episode from her early childhood that presents her as a smart and resolute student:

Extract 16

It was necessary to collect grass for the winter … and we, the women, needed to do both, go to work and collect hay for the winter … As a village, we have a small space in which to collect food. We, all the women, were forcing ourselves, with a boat ... to get to the other side [of the lake] … One day, we started in the morning, although it was cloudy and windy … We were caught by the rain … And then in the middle of the lake waves came up. The other one [her sister-in-law] was screaming … the waves were taking us, lifting us up and then dropping us. From here my mother-in-law was watching us … when the wave was taking us high ... then would sink us the boat could not be seen. "They are gone, our daughters-in-law are drowned." We would appear again. She was weeping, screaming. "Shut up, shut up" – I was yelling at her. "Do not scream because it will attract the attention of the villagers – they must not see us." We were fighting alone ... on the lake, and for what? For two heaps of grass for the livestock. That is the life – you are going to fight.

The figurative language following the resolution of the story – "and for what?" – marks the climax of the story. With the implication that this question is difficult or impossible to answer, it actually reinforces the importance of the preceding utterances. The subsequent utterances, such as "that's life" and "you are going to

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fight" are general comments rather than direct answers to the question. In this way, one can argue, this rhetorical device draws the attention of the listener to the point of the story. In other words, it foregrounds her acts of bravery and resoluteness in the face of unpredictable forces of nature, or for that matter, of whatever challenges life presents to her. In this performance of the self, she engages the biophysical environment as a challenger.

In this narrative Mannka positions herself so that the wave cooperates in the presentation of her bravery. It does so by emphasizing the hierarchical, strikingly unequal, interpersonal relationship between the two passengers in the boat. Arguably, this moment is greatly relevant to her performance, that is, her self-identity, but it also bespeaks the cultural and social context within which the meaning of this experience is constructed. For instance, it could mean that one should suppress, control or hide from others a fear (of natural forces). Or, perhaps it is about one's competence and capabilities to carrying out, in this case, routine (outdoor) duties, despite their seeming futility and meaningless (as measured by the value of a life).

For Mannka and other women in her village the capacity to cope with the vagaries of the natural environment is highly relevant. With their husbands and children away for most of the year (working, studying abroad), the women (and the elderly people) in this village shoulder the burdens of managing the households and family affairs. Tasks previously shared with or performed by their husbands, such as livestock grazing and tending, gardening and harvesting, now rest entirely on them. While recognizing the challenge, Mannka is determined to rise to the new roles and perform them with competence. The following episode, recollected in her talk immediately after that above, lends additional support to this line of reasoning:

Extract 17

We have been also going with goats, have been shepherding, and tending cattle … I was with the sheep … exactly at the time when they were lambing. We were going with a friend of mine. Mid-way a sheep birthed a lamb … On the other side, the wolf broke in, among the sheep… the sheep gathered, they got together … And to see what, a sheep clutched by the wolf … tearing it, with his claws, the nails … What are we doing now? ... He fears no stone nor he is afraid of a piece of wood … I started again to hit him with stones and he let her off. She was scared by the pain, and started running … I barely managed to bring her to the flock … She was the one who gave birth … Whose was it? – We didn't know … As the blood was dripping ... we followed the track. We went to the steward and told him what had happened … "we brought her back alive – now you take care of her; you slay her, you put stitches, you heal her – it's your problem." They managed to save the sheep … and she gave them another lamb.

Her family participates in what may be called cooperative herding, an arrangement where a number of households pool together private flocks of small (suboptimal) size and the resulting herd is tended by one herdsman. Each household contributes in the tending of the herd according to its share of herd. In this case it was women and elderly people from the contributing households who usually tended the herd.

Once again, the dialogic part of the last narrative can be examined to discover how the reported experience is evaluated. Arguably, the point of the story is that she

(and her friend) managed to bring the sheep back alive. That was exactly their duty as shepherds on behalf of their community. The subordinate role of the other actor in this episode is less emphasized, and also less relevant to the point of the story. This narrative still complements the presentation of herself as a brave and competent person – it was she who scared away the wolf. In conclusion, this narrative is in concurrence with the general theme of her talk, adding further evidence, or for that matter demonstration, of her skills, resoluteness, and bravery.

Aside from the comment that she – in fact most women of her community – is overburdened by the chores in the household, Mannka is careful not to raise (other) objections. On the contrary, she contends that shepherding is simply a way of being a peasant. It is rather intriguing that both of Mannka's narratives are rich in drama but void of fear or any sort of trauma on her part. Nevertheless, in checking the participant observation notes the fact stands that men always tend the livestock alone while women always work in pairs. Tellingly, Mannka makes no comment about this fact in her talk.

The emphasis on the stability and permanence of the self in the face of the unpredictable and changing environment of the place is also evident in Gotse's recollection of an episode from his early adolescence. It was a period in his lifespan when he was becoming conscious of how other people judged him. At that time his family participated in cooperative herding where the neighboring households pooled together their small flocks of cattle. In this case it was boys and elderly people from the contributing households who usually tended the herd. In the narrative his competence as a cattle-tending boy are challenged and thereby the consistency of his overall self-concept as "a solid boy."

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His narrative highlights several dimensions of competence in cattle herding and tending. Cattle ownership is a case in point; the herder knows the owner of each individual animal in the herd; the herder is also expected to recognize each individual animal and know its behavior. The narrative is rich in details about such routines as grazing and resting, the qualities of micro locations in terms of types and availability of grass, watering places and description of the ambience. For Gotse, the meadows around his village have become a place of established routine interactions with both the biophysical environment (including domestic animals) and people (e.g., the owners and other herders), eventually leading to passivity. It was in such a lag mode that the mundane and ordinary, the fabric of everyday herding, was disrupted and translated into a little adventure worth telling in the interview:

Extract 18

… I count the cattle … two of them have run away … I was into a book. "It's peaceful," I tell myself, "there are no mosquitoes, no heat, so she will come back, as always." However, … I checked around … they are missing.

It is after this point in the narrative that the obscured practices of everyday herding are revealed and reconstructed in great detail. In the remainder of the narrative he also relates his knowledge about the behavior of predators, bears and wolves, the preferred habitats of both domestic and wild animals, the coping strategies of people in such circumstances, and the social and cultural norms entailed in the business of cooperative herding:

Extract 19

And I was so happy; I was most happy. And for a kid, you know,
however, to lose a cow, not only it is a shame, but also a waste, both, you
know. You have been solid for so long, pursuing that business and now
this happens to you.

Comparing the two narratives on herding there are many similarities and no
obvious gender differences are evident when it comes to the role of the biophysical
environment in the construction of self-identity in anecdotes. The same is true for
other similar narratives which are not presented here. It would be a mistake to
conclude, however, that this similarity is absolute. For the purposes of the current
discussion, nonetheless, both narratives are examples of participants' emphasis on
stability, predictability, and order in their relationship to place. These examples also
show that the competence and the ability to carry out routine duties in the inherently
unpredictable environment are central to a stable sense of self in connection with
place.

4.4.2. "Growing" with change

This section discusses in detail excerpts from Militsa's and Hrysto's talk and
shows how both self-identity and place are mutually reconfigured following an
individual's novel ways of interaction with and experience of the social and
biophysical environment of place. For instance, for Militsa the move to Seltse after
she married had significant implications for her self-identity, as the previous sections
demonstrated. To convey the meaning of this experience, she explicitly refers to some
features of the landscape. In her narrative she outlines the landscape of her place of

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birth just to emphasize some features in that of her new place of residence. In both instances, the physical geography of the landscape is put to the fore:

Extract 20

In my place, Serbia, I am from Kosovo, Brezovac, there the place is flat, I mean "flat Kosovo." Here is a mountainous place. And that was really strange to me … haven't even dreamed about walking through hills, through mountains, and collecting mushrooms.

The point she makes in this narrative perhaps has more to do with the associated activities in the landscape than with the mere image of it. There is evidence throughout her life-story to support this idea, but the most convincing is the following narrative, told after she was specifically asked to expand on her experience of mushroom picking:

Extract 21

I remember. I see everyone go collecting, so I do, too. What else? I am afraid of going into mountains. Simply, I am afraid; haven't gone alone anywhere – especially not in mountains; will get lost. They know the terrain in Seltse; they know the mountains. Once I went alone. I tricked myself. I cannot go with other women, I go alone; slowly, slowly and looking for mushrooms. And telling to myself: "Well, this is destiny, cannot understand what is this." All right, I tricked myself and, am finding here, finding over there, and gradually entered deeper – I moved into the mountains and... I got lost! It started thundering but I am finding more and more mushrooms. What to do now? I felt I was lost. Got lost. No way I can find the way back. However, it was pretty high and I

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paused to look around. Well, I hear something like a chainsaw or something like trees being cut. And then I started shouting at them. "Hey, who are you, who are you?" And it was him, from Seltse, a man, a villager, … He is a shepherd. I thought I was in a different village. I asked him where I am. "Hey, Militsa. Is it you? It's me. Well, get down here, follow the river towards me, you are here, in Seltse." And then my soul got back in place … Then rain started, and to thunder. I am afraid of thunder … and I panicked even more … And then, I started descending towards that man and then he escorted me to the village … And I got home, but frightened; I told myself I will never go again. It is also difficult, but also, it is relaxing; it is nice to walk in the clean air and to calm your brain and the like. But, I think, if someone had told me that – in your life you're going to get married in Seltse, and going to wander in the mountains and collect mushrooms – I would have taken his eye out … Me? Going to collect mushrooms in the mountains? Nevertheless, in your life everything will happen … Now I am used to it and to collecting mushrooms; I have mastered it. Ready or not, slowly, I go and search for them; that is a kind of a recreation to me. Still, not to be overwhelmed, because I am rheumatic, my joints ache, my legs. But it is a must, a battle for life. I see everyone else goes so I do, too.

There are many angles from which to scrutinize the rich and nuanced meanings embedded in this narrative, but I shall first focus on what Militsa says in the evaluation clauses – the soul of the narrative. In this extract the following utterance stands out by its form and the rhetorical devices employed: "If somebody had told me that – in your life you are going to get married in Seltse, and going to wander in the

mountains, and collect mushrooms – I would have taken his eye out … Me? Going to collect mushrooms in the mountains?" This dialogue with herself or perhaps another, imaginary, person signifies a process of self-reflection by which she evaluates this episode in her life. Her statements, one can argue, reflect the tensions in the self-presentation through the concept of place identity. In this dialogue the community (the village of Seltse), its biophysical environment (rugged unfamiliar terrain) and the attendant practices (collecting mushrooms) are brought together to create a coherent image or identity of the place. In similar fashion, elsewhere in her life-story, she constructs the identity of her place of birth to comprise the community (of the city of Brezovac) and the fertile plains (of Kosovo Polje), as a place where the food is plentiful and life in a modern agrarian family is comfortable. In doing this, she evaluates the qualities of her current place of residence, at least indirectly, through a comparison with her place of birth. Arguably this self-reflection touches upon one of the central tensions in the construction of her self-identity – how to reconcile her past and present self-identities.

This problem of continuity and coherence in the self-concepts is, one may state, resolved or alleviated in this narrative in several ways, even though only temporarily. In the first place, she values the restorative benefits of mushroom picking in the mountainous terrain of Seltse: "It is relaxing; it is nice to walk in the clean air and to calm your brain." One can only infer whether the phrase "clean air" has direct or symbolic meaning having in mind that Seltse is a small, quiet village, set in mountains covered with dense forest, far away from large urban centers, industrial installations or motorways. Also, recreational walking itself is not a local activity; it does not contribute to the process of rural production.

The mountains around the village are, she also notes, a place for solace and restoration, a place to "calm your brain," to escape from everyday activities and demands. As pointed out in the extract above, she prefers to collect mushrooms alone instead of joining other women from the village. This is despite her fear of thunder or getting lost in the unfamiliar terrain. Such fears are, nevertheless, outweighed by the urgency of life, as noted in another evaluative utterance in the same extract: "It is a must, a battle for life." And this means courage and readiness to accept and face the vicissitudes of life: "Nevertheless, in your life everything will happen." Moreover, this is a cultural norm, as captured by the central metaphor of this narrative: "everyone else goes so I do, too." Opening and closing the story, this metaphor brings coherence to it; this is why it is relevant to understanding the meaning Militsa ascribes to this particular experience. In conclusion, in this narrative she takes the listener into her past and recapitulates what happened then to make a point, a moral one: Life is unpredictable, and one is obliged to face this fact.

Going back to the argument made in the previous sub-section, Militsa's talk supports the earlier argument that the competence and abilities to carry out routine duties in the inherently unpredictable environment are central to a stable sense of self in connection with place. In revisiting this argument and the logic behind it some repetition is inevitable. In the first place, for Militsa, the alignment of her practices with those established in the community of Seltse ("everyone else goes") is a matter of necessity because she shares the common fate of an economic downturn. Accomplishing this is, however, far from unproblematic for Militsa for it upsets her identity constructed around the technologically advanced community of Brezovac in the fertile plains of Kosovo Polje. The construction processes work on her pre-existing place identity, which eventually ends up being a constraint. In other words,

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the production of the new identity around the argument of necessity at once entails construction and constraint. The environment mediates this process, though in an ambivalent way. One can observe that the economic necessity is neatly intermingled with psychological benefits – the restorative effects – of her excursions into the mountains. In the search for monetary benefits – mushrooms to be traded – she discovers the "clean air" of the previously neglected and feared part of the landscape enclosing her village.

This is, one can claim, credible evidence that the biophysical environment is involved, through mediation, in the construction of self-identity. I have not, however, investigated how exactly this is achieved; it is now time to expand the analysis to this idea. At the start, one must revisit the previous observation that the point of Militsa's narrative evolves around activities in the landscape rather that the character of the landscape. This observation, however, begs the question of the role of the landscape. In other words, is it neutral and external to human activities? Or, to rephrase Ingold's (2000, p. 20) critique of the established conceptualization of nature, is it the case that the mountains, the forest and the mushrooms it shelters, are merely an "enduring backdrop to the conduct" of Militsa's affairs?

Following Ingold (2000), one way of reading Militsa's experience in the woods is to think of the mushrooms, for instance, as something that pre-existed, a mere substrate, awaiting the impress of cultural (monetary) significance; as though mushroom picking is merely a matter of provisioning. With some symbolic imagination, this line of reasoning could be easily extended to the "clean air" – a product of symbolic representations, standing for the need for solace and restoration (a place to "calm your brain") and escape from the everyday burdens of living in the

community of Seltse and beyond. That is to say, the rugged mountains, the forests offering mushrooms, the clean air and also the thunder and rain are appropriated symbolically within the terms of accepted or imposed cultural norms prevailing in the community of Seltse (or for that matter in Brezovac).

Ingold's work (2000), building upon Gibson's ecological approach to perception (1986), suggests an alternative interpretation which can be applied to Militsa's experience of the local landscape. For instance, in keeping with Ingold (2000), one can start with the idea that Militsa is not attaching meanings to the landscape, but rather she is "gathering" them from it as she moves through the environment (p. 193). As a novice mushroom gatherer, she travels through the mountains with no companions as her guides and mentors to show her a trail or a poisonous from an edible (commercial) mushroom. As she goes, she discovers specific features, such as mushrooms, a viewpoint or a stream; by watching, listening and feeling (perplexed thoughts, clean air in the lungs) she is finding her way in and out of the forest. In this approach one can assume that the meanings and the knowledge of the biophysical environment of the place are born of immediate experience, from an intimate involvement in a place. One can also assume that the mushrooms, but also the topography of the mountains and the clouds moving above the head are just as much participants in the journey of the mushroom gatherer. Indeed, in telling her story about her first experience of mushroom gathering, Militsa is guiding attention to all the participants. Through the exercises of descending and climbing the mountain, through her bodily experience, her aching joints in particular, she experiences herself in the identity of a person suffering arthritis, a person with a disability. Now it is not because of the clean air, recreation, money or necessity, but rather through the act of living in the place, in previously unknown spaces, that the

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landscape of Seltse becomes part of her self-identity. This is how the mountain, the woods, the air, and the river, as well as the mushrooms take on personal meaning. In this interpretation, the meanings of the biophysical environment are not inscribed or pinned to its unknown parts by applying particular mental ideas she constantly carries around in her mind, such as a blueprint of an edible mushroom and the concept of recreation. Rather, they are there to be discovered, and gathered, through the senses, the eyes, ears, tactile senses. With this in mind, one can argue that in her life-interview she presents more than images of her place of origin or her current place of living. The meanings of these places are contingent upon the experiences they afford when one spends time there. This may be one of the reasons why her descriptions of the landscape and the associated activities are void of explicit and conclusive value judgments.

Before proceeding further, I should comment on the curious superficiality in participants' talk about the biophysical environment. Perhaps the interview design applied in this research is not (the most) appropriate way to recollect one's perceptual experience of the biophysical environment. Indeed, in their talk participants, regardless of the level of education or profession, seldom elaborate on or give details of the perceptual qualities of the biophysical environment, although this is not to say that they are not aware of them. For instance, in his talk Naum makes few observations or comments concerning his sensory experience of his place. It was only by talking to him in the field, while herding animals or collecting fire wood that such observations and comments could be recorded by the researcher, such as "I like the mountain in the spring when the flowers bloom" or "I keep it [the plant] between my teeth to carry around its flavor." The same could be easily true for the other

participants in this research. Unfortunately, participant observation data collected during this stage of the research were mostly irrelevant for the present discussion.

The foregoing discussion suggested that the meanings and the knowledge of the biophysical environment of the place are born of the everyday involvement in a place. Perhaps nowhere is our everyday interaction with the biophysical environment more intensive than in the home. We may reasonably suppose that for most people the home is the center of their experience at any life stage. Home gains prominence mostly because of the importance of family to self-identity, as the previous sections repeatedly argued. The biophysical environment enters everyday activities through the material conditions of home life, both its natural and built components, also including the objects the home accommodates.

Home implies a certain degree of stability, predictability, and order in knowing what to expect from the physical surroundings. The predictable circumstances of the home provide a stable sense of self in connection with the material environment. This may be the reason why the routine practices at home, the repetition and sameness of everyday life, hardly qualify as a basis for storytelling. The following extract from Mannka's interview is a telling example:

Extract 22

The researcher: It doesn't matter, small or big events, mundane, extraordinary, whatever, I am interested in all of them. Thus, would you like to finish this part, this session? Would you? Isn't there anything to…

Mannka: There is nothing to tell. Well, to tell nonsense, to tell "I got up, drank coffee, had breakfast, ate," did this, did that…

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The researcher: I see, it's ok…

Mannka: There is no point in telling those…hah, hah.

From the interview data it is evident that while participants may recount these banal daily events, telling a narrative regularly seeks the exceptional, something worth telling about. The obscured practices of everyday life appear to have little relevance to the major narrative themes, the self-concepts of the respondents or presentations of the self through narratives. Such routines, however, may draw the attention of the narrator at the moment of their disruption.

The disruption of the ordinary transforms the mundane occurrences of everyday life into something worth telling about and sometimes it carries a profound message of fate or destiny. Such was the experience Hrysto recounted at the beginning of his talk. Prompted by the initial question to tell stories about his personal experience, events and happenings in connection to his place, he promptly singled out a recent accident when his stable collapsed, "as the first experience" in the course of his life. In fact, this narrative is a coherent bundle of interlinked episodes where the meaning of death, life, and permanence intermingle. Marking an important period in his life, this narrative embraces three distinct episodes in a series, each of which gets stronger and more impressive until the last, which emphasizes the force of all the preceding ones.

The narrative begins with an orientation where he briefly specifies the time, place, and persons participating in the events. In accordance with the established customs of Orthodox Christianity, he was commemorating the third anniversary of his father's death, together with "all of his people," at his family house in Seltse. That day in January was also marked by the birth of a calf in the stable, located just few steps

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from the house. For Hrysto and his guests it was "a strange thing" to observe the birth of a new life on the very day of commemorating the end of another one. A few years before this event Hrysto had lost his job in the local textile factory; by the time of this event he had entirely transformed himself from factory worker to full-time farmer. His business was prospering and the livestock in his stable was steadily increasing in numbers. That winter there were heavy snow falls and there was not much to do on the farm; it was usual for the male farmers to spend the long January nights in the nearby bar, drinking and playing cards. That very night, he remembers, he could stay longer and drink more than he previously would because the three-year period of mourning had ended earlier that day.

But there was an unexpected reason for him to be sober. Early in the morning, before dawn, he was unsettled in his bed by the worried call of his wife. The kitchen on the ground floor was flooded and the water seemed to keep coming from nowhere. This was entirely unexpected to him and his family: "We wondered where the water was coming from."

Besides the interview, the researcher had many informal interactions with Hrysto, his wife and his two sons in which they mentioned this incident and explained how the water trickled through the walls and the foundations of the house. It was coming from a creek on a nearby hill due to the lack of insulation and proper drainage. Their house is situated at the foot of that hill, with the ground floor half dug in the soft ground. In this narrative, however, he did not venture to explain the cause of the flooding; he did mention, however, that the ditch his sons and the neighbors dug that morning solved the problem. One can speculate that telling such technical

details would have interrupted the dramatic performance of his narrative and breached the sensation of an "unexpected" or "strange" event.

This event was soon followed by even more dramatic one – the collapse of the stable. It is not quite clear from the narrative whether it happened in the morning of the third day after the commemoration; to Hrysto it happened "at the same time." With the help of his sons he managed to free the animals from the collapsed structure without any losses. That day he also managed to accommodate the livestock in an empty stable in the village, in which he received great help from a friend in the village.

As in the case of the preceding episode, Hrysto did not attend to or speculate about the reasons for the collapse of the stable. Instead, in recounting this event, and also the other episodes of this narrative, Hrysto focuses in detail on the interaction between the different actors in the story, such as his wife, his two sons, the neighbors, friends, and fellow villagers. In this manner he proceeds with an episode about how he managed to rebuild the stable with thick walls made with a great deal of concrete and stones collected from the nearby river, using sand excavated from the nearby lake and strong beams for the roof. It was made to last; it was rebuilt into "the most modern stable in the village."

Immediately after this narrative, Hrysto goes on to tell of another disturbing experience; it was about how he discovered his little son was ill with diabetes and how he struggled with the new situation. He recounts disagreements with the doctors, his mistrust in the local medical institutions, as well as the search for alternative explanations and cures for the illness. Following the directions from a local clairvoyant he took his 7-year-old boy to three churches in the region to drink from

their springs of holy water; it was in one of these churches that he had an encounter with the Mother of God.

What brings together these two important narratives in his interview is the theme of persistence, resoluteness, and self-importance. In both narratives Hrysto is at the centre of the action and an important node of a wide and dense network of social ties. The personal meanings of the different events recollected in the two narratives are bound by the main theme, bringing coherence to this part of the interview: persistence and resoluteness.

A rather unexpected twist in the meaning-making of these events followed, however, during the second part of the interview. On this occasion he was responding to researcher's request to go back to some of the events and people mentioned in the first part and tell more or related stories. When asked to recollect his memories about events and experiences connected to his father, Hrysto goes back to the events mentioned in the opening narrative in his interview. He first recollects, in much detail, the moment when his father died "in his arms" and then continues to reinterpret the events that preceded and followed his death, including those immediately after the commemoration of the third anniversary of his father's death, as presented in the following excerpt:

Extract 23

There were many people; I had many people, when it happened. Well, the stable, when it fell, it was not that rotten so it had to collapse. Disaster, yes, I think it was some force by God. There was only one extended beam, one cracked beam. A stable does not collapse because of one beam. Or because of one extended beam, projecting outwards by a

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meter. I've got relatives – they were supposed to come into my home with bread. That is the custom, and they were bringing bread, but instead of bringing it to my house, they brought it to the church; afterwards they came over here. It is only because of them that my stable collapsed. That is my conviction. In my view, that is the sole reason for the collapse. And the water that flooded [the house] as well as the stable. Only that is the adversity. That is the power of God. I tell that, because I believe in these things. In addition to that, there, the Mother of God, she appeared to me. And the stable, those things, and those with the little boy, those things. And I believe – I did not believe until then. And then my kid got ill. I believe in all of those things. I believe in all of them.

In the extract above, with unpredictable inventiveness, Hrysto links together disjointed, disproportionate, and qualitatively distinct events in order to come to a meaningful interpretation of his recent life. Probably more than 10 years had elapsed between the time when Hrysto found about his son's illness and the time when the accidents in his house took place following the commemoration of the third anniversary of his father's death. From the references to this events in other parts of the interview one can reliably conclude that the first preceded the latter. Yet, in the extract above, there is anachronism in the sequence of the experiences recollected in relation to an objective or external conception of time. This returns one's attention to the previous observation about Hrysto's imprecision about the sequence of the three episodes: the commemoration, the flooding of the house, and the collapse of the stable. Indeed, this is in stark contrast to his frequent references to time in the rest of his talk, such as "it was four, half-past four in the morning" referring to the time when the stable collapsed, or "I got back home at two hours after midnight," just before the

flooding was discovered, and many other instances. It perhaps implies that in this case the narrated experience does not make sense of the individual events; instead it depends on the relationship among them and, in this case, the timing of their presentation, not the objective time. Likewise, the possible objective causes for the collapse of the stable are simply swept away by the powers of God to open room for an alternative meaning of the events and the related experiences. Events become meaningful because of their placement in a narrative. Hrysto says in evaluation clauses how he wants to be understood and what the point is.

Yet one cannot help noting a curious discrepancy between the transcendent interpretation of and the reported response to the events, such as the rebuilding of the stable with strong, better materials, or digging a ditch in the back of the house to drain the groundwater seeping from the nearby hill. It is also intriguing that in telling the narrative Hrysto ignores the discrepancy between transcendental norms, overseen by God, and the business of everyday life, not to speak of how this discrepancy could be resolved.

The overwhelming character of the events Hrysto has experienced in his forties, emotionally, physically, and cognitively, had profound effects upon his self-identity, ultimately bringing about conversion to religious belief. These events involved complex and intermingled interactions with both the biophysical and the social environment. Although his interpretation of the causes driving the events is ambiguous and perhaps subordinated to the goal of an effective performance of the narrative, the extraordinary engagement with the biophysical environment within his household had significant consequences for Hrysto's presentation of self in the interview. In other words, the introductory narratives of his interview are about

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experiences in which a person feels a sense of transcending the limits of the self, participating in a deeper meaning. In this interpretation, though mediated by the biophysical environment, God is the ultimate source of meaning.

These two narratives, those of Militsa and Hrysto, are two different cases of one phenomenon – that of place making or place re-making. Hrysto's narrative concerns an experience of a breakdown and rebuilding of the home in all its aspects: material, social, and emotional. It is a narrative about discordance: a breach in the ordinary, expected course of his life. The conditions in the center of his everyday existence have been affected in such a profound way that the matrix of accumulated perceptions, appreciations, and actions could no longer be sustained. The everyday life enacted in the very room where his father died in his arms, a moment so vivid in Hrysto's memory, has been affected in many ways. Not only is his father no longer to be seen in this room, but the very couch on which he used to lie, and ultimately died, is gone, replaced by a new, modern sofa. From a room where his father rested and slept it has become a living room and a kitchen. The former conditions and the ambiance of this room have been permeated not only by death and the water, coming "from nowhere," but also by the novel minutiae of activities which are gradually enacted and re-enacted on a daily basis, routinely. The meanings, practices and material conditions have all changed. The nearby stable, located just next to this room, an inextricable context of everyday home activities, collapsed, thus threatening the very preconditions for his everyday life as a full-time farmer. All of these aspects have been constitutive in his self-identity.

With the rebuilding of the stable, Hrysto actually marks the final stage of the ongoing remaking of his home, a process which entailed new material conditions, new

practices, and different social arrangements. Such changes make it possible to achieve a new diversity of tasks, activities, new habitual interactions with people and objects, configured in such a way as to support daily life in the household. It is he who now expects his sons to take care of him in times of illness or incapacity in his later life.

What Militsa recollects in her narrative is, one can argue, also about emergence, the becoming of a new place. What before was an exterior surface of the terrain encircling her village of Seltse, an optic array of light reflecting off the rugged mountains, has now become a place through the proximate contact of her body. It has become a place to Militsa through a process of embodiment, the incorporation of its features using all of her senses, and through patterned activities of collecting mushrooms: "And now I am used to it and to collecting mushrooms." Over time, through repeated perception and action in the previously unknown and feared environment, the landscape of her village has become a congeries, a matrix of places, such as her home, the village hall where she danced as a young bride, the woods around her village where mushrooms grow, the clean air of the mountain, the river that guides her in finding her way back home or takes her to a meadow where the whole community gathers in spring to dance the horah. Once a spectator of the landscape, Militsa has grown into a participant in it. In sum, the narrative on mushroom picking is an example of the process of place-making.

In the case of Militsa this instance of place-making was marked by a number of tensions, complications, and conditionality. First and foremost, she had to override her fears of the landscape such as the unknown terrain, mountains, and thunderstorms. In return, she discovered the restorative benefits of being in the "fresh air." Furthermore, during the interaction with that place she has to cope with her bodily

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capacities, or rather incapacities, that limit her behavior in the mountains; she needs to move slowly and, moreover, alone, foregoing the comfort and security of human company (of other women) and the experience of novel ways of social interaction. All of this has direct implications for her self-identity both in physical and behavioral terms. She can claim to be a different person now, she can cope with fear of the mountains and thunderstorms; psychologically, as Militsa noted, she is a more balanced person, with her senses and mind relaxed and refreshed; but, also, she is more aware of her bodily (in)capacities (due to rheumatism). In conclusion, through interaction with the biophysical environment of her place(s) Militsa expanded the potential range of identities she can claim. Her stories (presentations) about herself as a member of the community of Seltse are enriched and her social interactions within it rearranged.

From the arguments and evidence presented above one may credibly conclude that the process of place-making is paralleled by that of self-making. Through the constitution of new places new self-concepts arise. This is why Militsa tells her story in the first place – because it is relevant to her self-identity, and more specifically, to the presentation of the self in her talk. It signifies an important change in the ongoing process of self-identity making. And this is why she chooses that particular episode and leaves out perhaps innumerable reports about the routine practices at home, from which perhaps hardly any would qualify as a basis for storytelling.

By the same token, the first episodes recollected by Hrysto are those concerning his home. In contrast to Militsa, Hrysto has developed a rich and intimate knowledge of the surrounding landscape. Elsewhere in his exhaustive interview he

tells a number of short narratives about his experience of the biophysical environment around his village and also in the wider Prespa basin.

Since his early teenage years he has helped tend livestock, earned money by cutting and selling firewood, and later his experience was continued and enriched by such activities as mushroom picking and treasure hunting with metal detectors. He has experienced the landscape in the region in many ways and many places, from corn fields and apple orchards in the valley to remote trails in the mountains, while tending domestic animals and through incidental encounters with beasts of the forest. This experience is a source of knowledge, competence, and confidence in moving through the landscape and utilizing the resources there. The minor complications or accidents he mentions in connection with the biophysical environment are, in his view, rather mundane facts of life as a logger or farmer, and may therefore be mentioned only in answer to direct requests to recall such events.

For sure, with his rich narrative skills he can transform those mundane occurrences of his life into an adventure, into something worth telling about, but they do not claim to carry a profound message of fate or destiny or the power of presenting important self-concepts. For instance, Hrysto mentions a short episode about his fear of lakes and being unable to swim. This seems to have no relevance to him, however, at least not to the self-image he is presenting in the talk.

Drawing on the discussion in this section it becomes evident that place is fabric-like, made of material and social relationships, constituted through the routine practices of everyday life. This is achieved through the body and involving the self. All elements involved in the process of place-making are affected and transformed along its course; neither material nor social relationships are stable and the same

applies to the body and the self. Importantly there is always some leeway that is inherent to the fabric of place so that some changes and reconfigurations of its contributing elements are possible without tearing it down and re-making it.

Thus, to summarize the narratives discussed in this section, the person-place relationship depends critically on a person's involvement with the biophysical and social environment in a place through the routine practices of everyday life. The successful completion of the daily routines in a place reinforces a person's sense of continuity and stability, which in turn sustains that person's self-identity and sense of well-being. Identities are not fixed and frozen so their relationship to place must be a dynamic one. The *fabric-like nature* of place provides for both *stability/permanence* and *change/development* of self-identity over the *life course*.

4.5. *Conclusions concerning the construction of self-identity and personalized place meanings*

As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the interview protocol was designed to elicit personal stories of participants' everyday life in their particular places, as they conceived them. The interview protocol did not guide the participants to define place or indicate topics to talk about. Also, the interview protocol did not offer clues or guide the participants to employing such concepts as "identity," "nature," "the environment," "ecosystem," "basin," "region," "society," or "community."

Following the analytical strategy of grounded theory, the interview data were studied for themes with the aim of identifying the "basic social processes within the data" (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001, p. 160). As Day (1991, p. 63) has observed, the emphasis on "basic social processes" in grounded theory reflects its "firm location in

an interactionist methodology," or more specifically, the symbolic interactionist tradition of the Chicago school. Following Day, the task of the researcher is to explicate the basic social processes in dynamic terms, that is, "how actions have consequences" (Day 1991, p. 63). Similarly, Strauss and Corbin (1998) define "process" as "the action/interaction over time of persons, organizations, and communities in response to certain problems and issues" (p. 127), but also note that "process should not be limited to steps and phases … Nor should it be restricted to basic social or psychological processes unless the term 'social process' also includes family organizational, arena, political, educational, and community processes as well as whatever other processes might be relevant to a study" (p. 293-294).

With these remarks in mind, and following the theoretical framework of this research, the present chapter focuses on themes and basic social or psychological processes pertaining person-place relationships. Before proceeding further, it is important to note that place can mean different things to different participants, as the discussion above showed. Some participants use the notion of place and community interchangeably and others simply referred to their village, a relatively bounded geographical area. Furthermore, the discussion above showed that the place referred to in some participants' talk cannot be easily grasped geographically; the meaning of personal experience in a place can also be inextricably linked to events and experiences in other places.

This chapter argued that the episodes or instances of personal experience recollected in participants' talk can be grouped thematically. The dominant themes in participants' talk were family, occupation (work), community, and the biophysical environment. These four themes can be seen first as a heuristic device to analyze the

empirical data gathered in this research. However, they do not immediately translate into abstract (theoretical) categories. The themes of family and work (occupation) stand out in that they help the participants to organize their overall talk. With few exceptions, the other two major themes, community and the biophysical environment, mostly appear in narrative segments (episodes) embedded within an overarching theme, such as the family and work.

According to Agar and Hobs (1982, pp. 6-7) the themes in participants' talk can help the researcher reconstruct participants' recurrent assumptions, beliefs, and goals – their "cognitive world." Following Agar and Hobs (1982), Mishler (1986) concluded that "a thematic analysis … of the various episodes in the story and the ways they are connected suggested that the story expresses general cultural values and at the same time represents the respondent's claim for a particular personal identity" (p. 104). In this research, regardless of the thematic organization of participants' talk, except in one single case, the different narrative episodes reflected participant's self-concepts, expressed in terms of personal values, beliefs, obligations, intentions, and commitments. Hence, following Agar and Hobs (1982, p. 7), the construction of self-identity provided for a global narrative coherence of participants' talk. Furthermore, this global coherence enabled participants in this research to accomplish the overall intent of the talk – presentation of personal experience in a place.

This chapter identified three major processes by which participants make meaning of place in the context of the four narrative themes mentioned above. The first – *mapping the self through the family* – concerns the relationship with family members whereby participants situate themselves in the social world, including spatially and historically. The complex relations among family members provide the

participants with collective identities which can also contribute significantly to their self-concepts, that is, their individual identities. Two concepts are central to understanding the ways the family moderates the person-place relationship: *family identity* and *family role*. The participants who identify themselves with family members can assume the identity of that social group – family identity. When participants identify themselves with family roles they assume gender identities. The social status asserted through social identity (family identity and family role) can be essential to person's identity (individual identity) to the extent that is a necessary condition for a meaningful life.

This chapter has argued that gender configures the relationships between family members in imbalanced ways that precipitate inequality within the family and beyond. The domesticated space of the family is an important setting where gendered social relations are expressed and maintained through the routines and practices of everyday life. This chapter lends compelling support to the long-standing argument that the home is of great personal significance and highly relevant for the construction of self-identity. Numerous examples discussed here demonstrate that for most people the home/household is the center of their experience at any life stage. This is the case, the examples suggest, mainly because the home is a locale or setting where fundamental social relations are constituted and acted out. Among these, family relations are of great significance to most participants in this research. Indeed, the ties between home and family can be so strong that for some participants the two are conflated. The prominence of social roles and responsibilities in a family in participants' talk reveals the centrality of home in the reproduction of gendered social relations. This observation is in line with feminist research which has empirically and theoretically demonstrated that home is central to the construction of people's

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identities. Summarizing the diverse definitions of home used in feminist and other frameworks of geographical thinking on home, Blunt and Dowling (2006) conclude that "household and domestic relations are critically gendered, whether through relations of caring and domestic labor, affective relations of belonging, or establishing connections between the individual, household and society" (p. 15).

The focus on gendered social relations, I propose, helps understand the multiple and sometimes ambiguous conceptualizations of family in participants' talk – from nuclear family (a household) to extended family (both kinship ties and family lineage). Since the home can be thought of as a site for reproduction of gendered social relations it can also stand for the material bases upon which social life is premised. In consequence, the enduring materiality of the "family house" for some participants stands for a site for reproduction of gendered social relations *over many generations*. This is how the house can provide a sense of stability in connection with both the social and material environment. Of course, "family house" can have other, symbolic, meanings. The home as a site for reproducing gendered relations is also related to the participants' narrative construction of self-identity as instantiation of dominant (traditional) types of femininity and masculinity (e.g., "head of the family").

Being a site for the reproduction of gendered social relations over generations, the home helps the participants give weight to, stabilize, and extend their personalities. The predictable circumstances of the home, the repetition and sameness of everyday life, provide a stable sense of self in connection with both the social and material environment. This is how home can become a source of belonging, security, and identity. This chapter has shown how the home is also a site for reproduction of social relations with the natural biophysical environment, such as through the family's

use of subsistence land and resources. Paradoxically, this conceptualization of home also implies openness, and fluidity, at the least because social relations always stretch beyond the home. The home is always inserted in broader sets of relationships of a more global character.

Some of the examples show how over time, through repeated perception and action, the landscape around the home becomes a congeries, a matrix of places, that is, the landscape is populated unevenly with places. The house and the neighborhood seem to be the thickest part of the landscape because they are the centers of experience for most of the participants. However, places are established beyond this scale. Depending on their daily activities, such as livestock tending, mushroom collecting, firewood harvesting, hunting, etc., participants' places may reach faraway into the landscape – perhaps the whole of the region of Prespa.

This research has shown that gender configures the relationships between family members in imbalanced ways that precipitate a hierarchy of access to property, power, and prestige, and ultimately inequality. According to Marston (2000), gender relations fall under the larger system of patriarchy. Marston uses the term patriarchy to stand for the "the unequal distribution of power and resources in society based on sex and gender" (2000, p. 233). On the other hand, as some participants suggested, the gendered social relations in a family should not be interpreted as a social structure that produces and reproduces subordination of women to men. Also, there is a general consent and acceptance among both female and male participants in this research of the ways in which gender relations are constructed and maintained in the home. For these and other reasons the term patriarchy, in the sense used by Marston, has been criticized for being too overarching and because it allows for "little scope either for

variations or for women to evade its reach" (McDowell 2003, p. 16). Instead of conceptualizing patriarchy as a universal feature of the relations between men and women, McDowell argues, "the ways in which gender relations result in unequal relations between women and men are influenced not only by gender, but also class position and ethnic origin" (p. 20). McDowell proposes the term "gender regimes" for understanding "the complexity of the ways in which gender is intercut by class, age, ethnicity and by other factors such as sexuality" (2003, p. 21). Similarly, Cannell (1996) argued that the concept of patriarchy, literally meaning the rule of the father, may misrepresent "the complexity of sexual relations and gendered identity" (p. 1015).

The discussion concerning the role of the family and the home showed that identity is not fixed firmly in place – on the contrary, the person-place relationship is unstable and often ambiguous. This is even more obvious in the analysis of the particular ways the concept of place mediates the construction and presentation of the self. More specifically, this chapter demonstrated that participants' commitments, values, obligations, and intentions are constructed with reference to both lived, actual, places and other, often imagined, places. The conceptualization of the latter, however, is often predicated on the experience of actual, lived places. This interplay of lived and imagined places exposes the ambivalent experiences of place. As Relph (1996) noted, the experiences of place involve "a fluctuating balance of feelings of attachment and entrapment" (p. 909). To some participants, a negative experience of place amounts to an overwhelming desire to be somewhere else. Furthermore, this chapter showed that people seek out places that match their actual or intended identities. Also, the examples support the conclusion that different places can be preferred over the course of life as personal values, beliefs, obligations, intentions,

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and commitments change. In other words, this research demonstrated that participants seek places that meet the expectations of different phases of their lifespan.

The quest for places that match the self throughout the lifespan is more prominent in some stages. Early in adulthood there is a marked dynamic opposition of the thrust for autonomy and personal development and the need for close intimate social relations; in later life emphasis tends to be more on stability. Matching the self with the place entails an evaluation of the social and the biophysical environment of place according to subjective standards, which in turn reflect participants' self-conceptions. The positive conjunction between identity and place in participants' talk is, as discussed above, achieved mainly with reference to the social environment in a place. Indeed, the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, the appearance of the biophysical environment (e.g., the lake, mountains, forests, orchards, and buildings) was not prominent in the meanings of place in the talks of these participants.

These observations echo the findings of studies conducted to explore the sense of place among residents in the Lake Superior basin shared by the United States of America and Canada (Cantrill 1998, Lagerrroos *et al.* 1995, quoted in Cantrill 1998). It was proposed that by attending to the "specific subject matter of discourse," the researchers can identify themes that reflect "identifications with where people live, what they value, and how they are situated in reference to the environment" (Cantrill 1998, p. 304). Using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis, Cantrill (1998) demonstrated that individuals living in the Lake Superior basin construct their sense of place at the regional/basin level along two dominant themes: "natural features" and "social characteristics." An important comment concerning the results of the study in the Lake Superior basin is that "at the level of

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interview-prompted discourse, the respondents in this study did not exhibit a high level of sophistication in describing their local environment" (Cantrill 1998, p. 313). This may be related to the fact that today human beings are capable of controlling the environment to the extent that "the construction of social and cultural meanings grew increasingly independent of physical settings" (Manuel-Navarette and Redclift 2010, p.345).

In general terms, the person-place congruence is connected to participants' sense of well-being. A number of objective and subjective terms arising in the larger body of interview data express participants' sense of well-being, or estimations of their quality of life. Work and finances, as well as the environment to a lesser degree, were prominent among the former whereas family life, the community, and friendships are most significant among the latter. Other objective factors contributing to participants' individual happiness, such as education, were less frequent in participants' talk. Curiously, in expressing their global life satisfaction some participants counterpoised animal to human well-being, captured by such phrases as "it is about being a human or, so to speak, an animal," or "becoming a human." In summary, the interview data suggest that a positive person-place relationship or a conjunction between self-identity and place is related to a positive sense of self-identity which in turn partly depends on a subjective sense of well-being. In addition, over the life course participants' may give differing importance to the various life domains such as economy, community, and the biophysical environment. This relationship is further complicated by the fact that a relationship with significant places of the past can also affect participants' sense of well-being and sense of identity. This issue becomes especially important to older participants. This dynamics in person-place relationship is captured well by Marcus (1992), who concluded that,

"our sense of identity develops and changes through our lives as a result of relationships with a variety of significant people and places" (p. 88). To summarize the argument above, representations of the self in connection to place also involve a process whereby participants evaluate the congruence between self-identity and place – *matching the self and place*. This evaluation is guided by two important concepts: *quality of life* and *life course*.

The third major process by which participants related to place in their talk is part of ongoing, everyday living and activity in a place. Both self-identity and place are perhaps best seen as something that is constantly negotiated and renegotiated as individuals simultaneously engage with their biophysical and social environment of place. The process of negotiating and renegotiating place and identity is discerned when paying attention to mundane and ordinary activities, although most of them hardly qualify as a basis for storytelling. The obscured practices of everyday life appear to have little relevance to the major narrative themes, but they may draw the attention of the narrator at the moment of their disruption. The disruption of the ordinary transforms the mundane occurrences of everyday life into something worth telling about, but also reveals the dynamics in person-place relationships. The larger body of interview data contains many accounts of anecdotes in outdoor settings where the biophysical environment contributes to the action or to the context of the action. On closer inspection, these narratives demonstrate that identity and place are negotiated and renegotiated and that through this process identities and places are made and re-made.

Several examples discussed in this chapter pointed to the fact that for the rural population the skills to cope with the vagaries of the natural environment are quite

relevant to the construction of self-identity. Competence and the abilities to carrying out routine (outdoor) duties are relevant to both women and men. Such competence is socially and culturally dependent. In addition, some practices are thought as part of place identity. For instance, shepherds are not expected to be afraid of wolves. Some of the examples presented also demonstrate that the level of sophistication in describing the local environment can be surprisingly high. The discussion of such examples demonstrates how individuals negotiate and maintain their identities in relation to practices and relationships which are in turn informed by their social and individual identities.

Participants experienced the fluidity of their self-identity particularly as they participated in novel interactions with biophysical and social environment. This chapter has demonstrated how landscape becomes a part of one's self-identity through the process of place making, that is, novel experiences of the biophysical environment. It was also suggested that place making and re-making is most salient when the relationships between the biophysical environment and the social environment, produced through the daily routines of an embodied subject, are being disrupted or established anew.

This chapter used the metaphor *fabric-like* to describe the nature of place and the essentially dynamic person-place interconnections which provide for both *stability/permanence* and the *change/development* of self-identity, but, over time, also place. The *reconfiguring the self and place* process identified in this chapter can therefore be thought of as a general process or pertaining to the basic feature of person-place relationship – the *co-constitution of self and place*. The other two processes which emerged from this research, *mapping the self through the family*, and

matching the self and place, capture two specific ways the person-place relationship is experienced or constructed in participant's narratives. The three major processes connecting self and place in participants' narratives and the emerging theoretical constructs are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the processes connecting self and place at the personal level and the emerging analytical constructs

Process	Emerging Analytical Constructs
Mapping the self through the family	Family identity (collective identity) Family role (collective identity)
Matching the self and place	Quality of life Life course
Reconfiguring the self and place	Co-constitution of self and place Stability/permanence of self-identity over the life course Change/development of self-identity over the life course

Following the discovery of the basic social and psychological processes and the emerging abstract categories that explain and synthesize these processes, the next task is to integrate the categories into a theoretical framework that "specifies causes, conditions and consequences of the process(es)" (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001, 160). The first step in this integration is deciding on a central category or core category (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 146). In addition, as Day (1991) explains, "the core category conceptualizes the 'basic social process' or basic problem addressed by the theory, providing an integrative framework around which the analysis develops" (p. 110). He also suggests that other categories which are related to the core category need to be examined in more depth (Day 1991, p. 110). With these last points, the *co-constitution of self and place* and the related *reconfiguring the self and place* process

emerge as the central category or, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) put it, the main "storyline" of this research.

The results from the analysis of the empirical data collected during the first stage of this research have much in common with earlier theoretical conceptualizations of place in human geography and environmental psychology. Some of the emerging categories presented in this chapter are similar to those identified by earlier theoretical and empirical work in environmental sociology on person-place relationships. For instance, Gustafson (2001) suggested a tentative analytical model for mapping the meanings spontaneously attributed to places by 14 respondents in an interview study designed to explore how people attribute meaning to places. His models consists of three poles – self, others, and environment – which refer to the three broad themes which emerged from his empirical data. In addition, Gustafson (2001) also identified four additional themes, referred to as "underlying dimensions of meaning," which did not fit neatly into his model, but in his interpretation organize the attribution of meaning on a deeper level: (i) *distinction*, (ii) *valuation*, (iii) *continuity*, and (iv) *change* (Gustafson 2001).

The four "underlying dimensions of meaning" identified by Gustafson (2001) have important similarities with Breakwell's (1993) identity process theory. According to Breakwell,

identity is a dynamic product of the interaction between on the one side the capacities for memory, consciousness and organized construal which are characteristic of the biological organism and on the other the physical and societal structures and influence processes which constitute the social context (1993, p. 7).

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Following this argument, Breakwell proposed that "identity structure" is determined by two processes: (i) assimilation-accommodation, and (ii) evaluation. These two processes are guided by at least four principles: (a) *continuity*, (b) *self-esteem*, (c) *self-efficacy*, and (d) *distinctiveness*.

Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) used Breakwell's identity process theory to investigate how people use places to construct a self-identity. In discussing the empirical data collected from 21 residents of Rotherhithe in the London Docklands, these authors found evidence, among the other things, that (i) place is established and used in the maintenance of the continuity of self, (ii) place is used to create, symbolize, and establish new selves, and (iii) place is used to maintain positive self-esteem. In another qualitative study, "exploring conceptualization of place as a process, rather than a static entity," conducted by Smaldone *et al.* (2005), three key themes emerged: (1) life stage/course, (2) searching for a feeling, and (3) commitment to a place. According to these authors, "place becomes meaningful due to the intersection of various attributes, such as activities, traditions, social ties, or length of association" (Smaldone *et al.* 2005, p. 412). In commenting on the results of their study these researchers conclude that: "Human beings are ever-changing entities, and the meanings they give to places are equally dynamic" (Smaldone *et al.* 2005, p. 412). Similarly, in their review of the literature that explores people's emotional relationships to place, Manzo (2003) concludes that "people's relationships to places are an ever-changing, dynamic phenomenon, and as such, they can be a conscious process in which people are active shapers of their lives" (p. 47).

The prominence of the family in the person-place relationships, here signified by the process termed *mapping the self through the family,* and the related concepts of

family identity and family role, has been also observed previously. For instance, in his work on displacement in working-class communities, Fried (1992) found that family life played central role in the development of attachment to place; the web of local social affiliations established through the family and kin was a major source of commitment to place for most people. Place dimensions of identity, this author argues, are usually "subordinated to more central aspects of identity formation: family history, gender roles, ethnic commitments, and social relationships all within a bounded space" (Fried, 2000, p. 197).

The idea that self-identity and place are constantly negotiated and renegotiated as individuals simultaneously engage with their biophysical and social environments of place is well established in the work of geographers who have develop humanistic notions of place. For instance, in explaining the idea that place and self are mutually constitutive, Sack (1997) argued that: "Just as places contain and alter elements from the three realms, so do selves: we are natural, social, and intellectual. Hence selves draw the realms together, but through and with the assistance of place" (p. 58). The observation that the meanings of place are constructed in the everyday life of the participants through intimate involvement with the social and material environment emphasizes the role of action. Indeed, the role of action for the construction of the meaning of place is central to conceptualizations of place proposed by humanistic geographers. For instance, Sack (1997) argued that "places constrain and enable our actions, and our actions construct and maintain places" (p. 13). More recently, Manuel-Navarette and Redclift (2010) noted that "the concept of place has to integrate both its location and its meaning in the context of human action" (p. 335). Similarly to the humanistic geographers, the anthropologist Tim Ingold (2000) posits that landscapes and places are made by the repeated actions of organisms over time.

He uses the concept of "dwelling perspective" that treats ''the immersion of the organism person in an environment or life world as an inescapable condition of existence" (p. 153).

Aware that the term *mutually constitutive* "does not illuminate how things really work," Sack (1997) developed "general relational framework" which maps out the dynamic interconnections between four major overlapping factors – forces, perspectives, place and space, and self – and maps out their dynamic. As presented in Figure 2 below, adapted from Sack (1997, p. 28), place and self are constituted through human action which depends on the forces in the realms of nature, meaning, and social relations. According to Sack (1997), the "similarities in structure between place and self … explain how the two become mutually constitutive" (128). Sack postulates that place "can become an agent in the formation of the self," and that "place and self help construct and activate each other" throughout person's lifespan (p. 132). The mutual constitution of place and self is presented graphically in Figure 3, adapted from Sack (1997, p. 132).

Sack's (1997) relational framework and his graphic presentation of the continuous connection between place and self are particularly useful for schematically presenting the three major processes which emerged from the empirical data at this stage of this research, as presented in Figure 4 below.
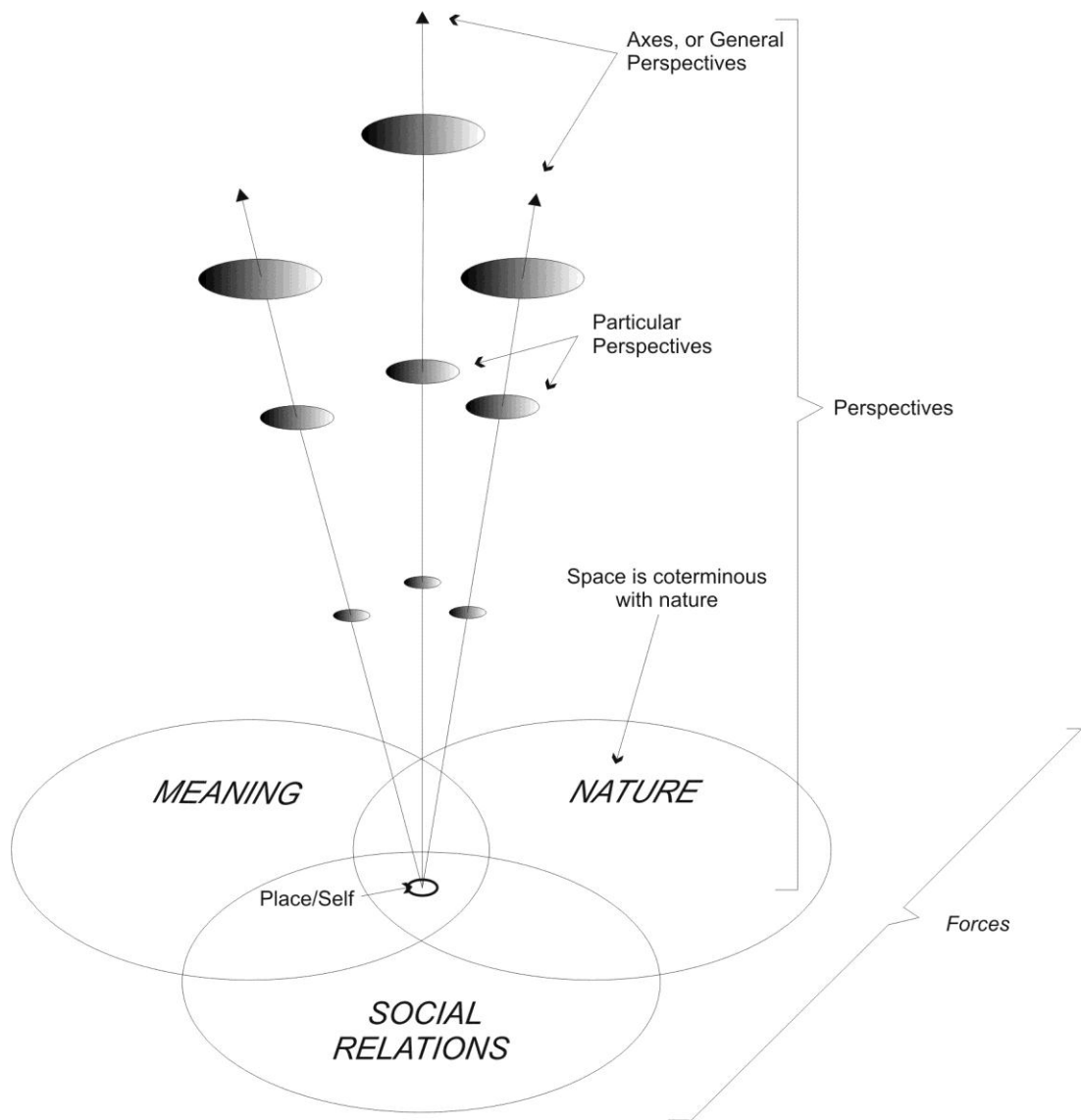
Figure 2. Sack's relational framework (adapted from Sack 1997, p. 28)

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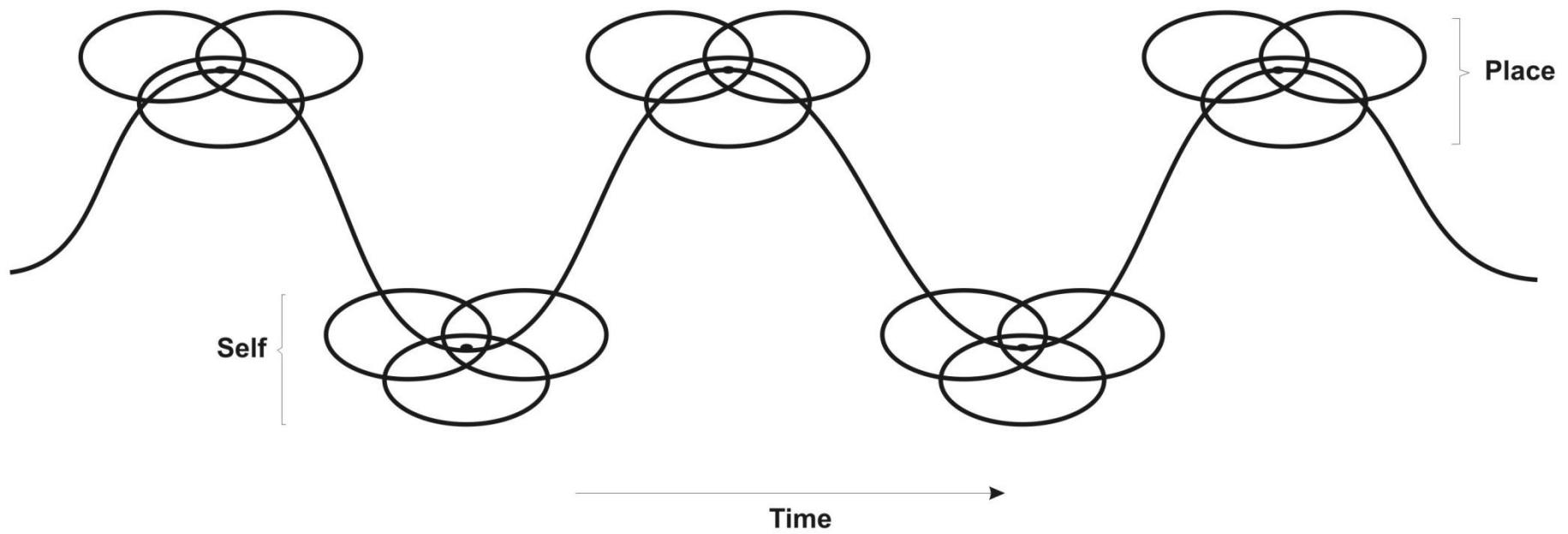
Figure 3. Sack's graphic presentation of the continuous connection between place and self (adapted from Sack 1997, p. 132)

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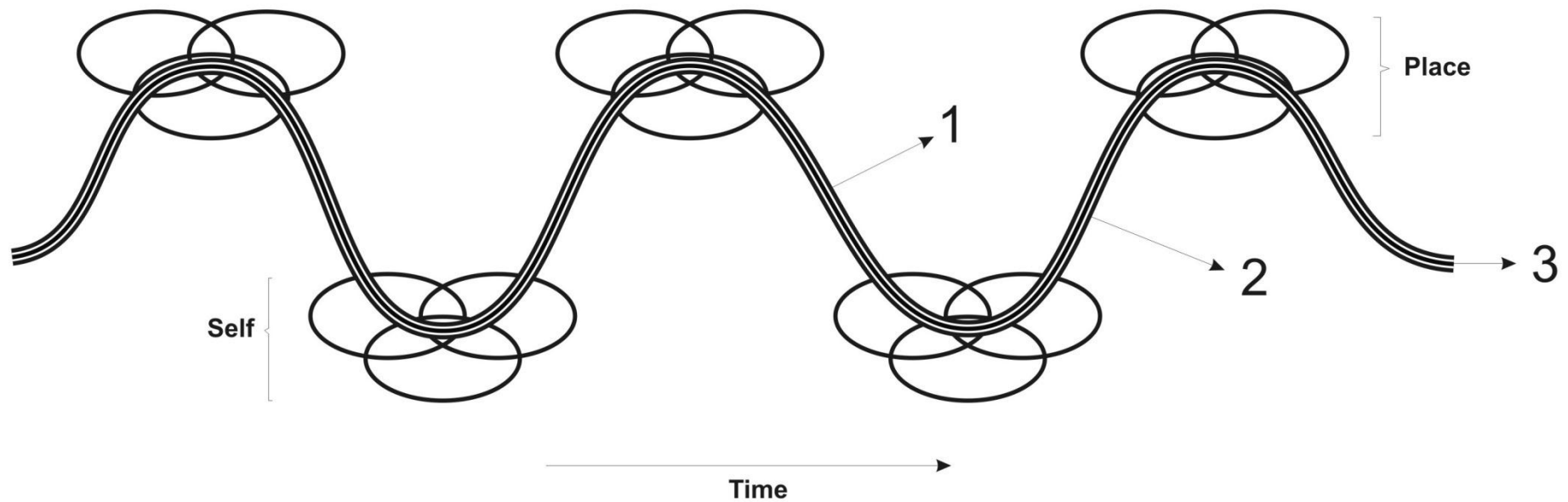
1 - Mapping the self through the family; **2 -** Matching the self and place; **3 -** Reconfiguring the self and place**.**

Figure 4. Graphic presentation of the major processes connecting self and place in participants' narratives (following the scheme presented by

Sack [1997, p. 132])

In the much-cited book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Barney C. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss (1967) offer guidelines for developing inductive "middle-range theory," that is, a theory that falls "between the 'minor working hypotheses' of everyday life and the 'all-inclusive' grand theories (pp. 32-33). Similarly, Neuman (2003) notes, "middle-range theories are slightly more abstract than empirical generalizations or specific hypotheses" (p. 61). In Turner's (1987) scheme depicting the relations among different theoretical approaches and the potential for building theory, "middle-range propositions" are grouped with "causal-empirical models" and "empirical generalizations" and are placed on "the more empirical side of theory-building" (p. 166). In his view, middle-range propositions "can be useful as one way of testing more abstract theories" (Turner 1987, p. 167). According to Turner's (1987) idealized scheme of relationships among theoretical approaches (p. 167), meta-theory is placed at the highest, most abstract, level and therefore is "highly philosophical and impossible to test" (p. 165). Sack's relational geographic framework is in essence meta-theory; indeed, Sack has been long interested in the relationship between geography and philosophy (2003, p. ix). Yet, his relational framework has also been used productively in empirical studies in natural resource management (Williams and Paterson 1996, Hurley *et al.* 2002, Cheng and Daniels 2003).

Sack's relational geographic framework, and also the above mentioned empirical studies which use it as a theoretical framework, repeatedly emphasize the importance of scale. For, as Sack (1977) notes, "although places of all scales operate the same way, they do combine different types of elements" (p. 121). The main goal of this chapter was to develop a better understanding of how personalized place meanings vary with individuals and the unique conditions in which they find themselves. In consequence, the previous sections discussed place and self-identity

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predominantly on the personal level and smaller geographical scales, allowing the collective levels, such as the community and nation, as well as larger geographical scales to slip from view. The following chapter discusses the empirical data collected during the second stage of this study. The data were collected selectively through theoretical sampling with the aim of addressing the issue of scale in person-place relationships and refining the theoretical categories that emerged during the first stage of this study.

CHAPTER 5. THE MAKING OF PRESPA: THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES AT THE BASIN LEVEL

Place is a useful concept for organizing one's recollections and presenting personal experience, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. The previous chapter reveals how the meanings of place are constructed in the everyday life of the participants through their intimate involvement with the biophysical and social environment. It was also demonstrated that place meanings may contribute significantly to the construction of the concept of self, that is, personal identity. Most notably, this is the case when there is a critical change in one's experience of the biophysical and social environment. It was in such cases that the participants were prompted to rethink their life experience and restructure their concepts of self. In turn this affects the meaning accorded to place.

The evidence presented suggests that the interaction between the individual and her biophysical and social environment is most intensive at home, with family members. Most of the participants who contributed data for the previous analysis were born or have spent considerable periods of their lives in small rural settlements in the Prespa watershed. Over time, they have accumulated rich experiences of the environments of their villages and their immediate surroundings. The geographic area supporting the construction of place meanings and identity varies in extent and depends largely on the type of activities the individual is involved in. The personal experience of the biophysical environment of this geographic area is patchy, has differing intensities, and changes over time.

The boundary of a geographic area which supports similar experiences of the biophysical and social environments for a person is likely to coincide with the boundary of her/his place. This is clearly evident in those cases where the place of birth and the place of residence are different but fall within the boundary of a geographical area where the biophysical and social environment is rather homogenous. That homogeneity is, of course, relative and is established through comparison with adjacent geographic areas or adjacent places. The data analyzed thus far indicate that the very process of conducting an interview may influence this comparison. In other words, the construction and presentation of place identity in the interview is contingent upon the circumstances created by the face-to-face interaction between the participant and the researcher.

Therefore, the process of place-making is inevitably idiosyncratic, but the specific concepts of place held by individuals sharing a geographic area may overlap to a great extent and eventually precipitate a shared place identity. The data analyzed in the previous chapter suggest that the processes of place-making at the individual and collective levels are mutually interdependent. This relationship becomes more complicated over larger geographic areas where different individuals are more likely to acquire different experiences with the biophysical and social environment, which also vary to a greater degree.

To summarize, the interview protocol, designed to elicit personal stories of participants' everyday life in their places of residence, yielded rich evidence about how individuals construct meanings of place in the course of their everyday interaction with their environments and about how these meanings may contribute significantly to the construction of self identity, including instances where there is a

close alignment or correspondence in the process of construction of place and identity. Inferences can be made with confidence, however, only about places of smaller geographical scales such as the home, small villages, and their immediate surroundings. There were scant clues in this body of data about how place-making proceeds at larger scales, such as the entire Prespa basin.

With a view to the central research question, during the second stage of this study the emphasis was on the ways whereby ideas and concepts of the biophysical environment relate to the construction of regional identity. In pursuing this task a number of specific issues were addressed in the interviews following grounded theory and theoretical sampling. The analysis of interview data in the second stage of this study was complemented by reading a number of popular books on Prespa, authored by people whose sense of belonging and attachment to Prespa was an important or the primary motivation for writing. Most of them clearly identify themselves with Prespa, that is, as being Prespiots. Hereinafter I will refer to these authors and the participants as Prespiots. Among the sources cited or used in writing their publications these authors refer to scientific or technical literature written by other Prespiots; these materials were also consulted. Other written sources were also included in the analysis such as official documents, policy papers and reports, and also newspaper articles and reports published in national and local media.

The business of this chapter is to present the additional data collected during the second phase of this study. The discussion in this chapter revolves around three salient and closely interrelated discourses emerging from the interview data. The first concerns the presentation of Prespa as a distinct and rather homogenous ethnic territory. The second concerns the construction of Prespa as a region characterized by

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competitive advantages on regional and global markets, most prominently through the tourism and agriculture sectors. The third is concerned with environmental issues in the Prespa basin and, more specifically, with the construction of Prespa as a region whose distinctive landscape is the product of the long and balanced interaction between "man and nature."

5.1. Presentation of the participants

This section introduces only those participants whose narratives are quoted in this chapter. In order to protect their identity, the presentations contain only general information about the participant. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the names used in the text are pseudonyms. These rules were not applied in the case of Kiril Jonovski, whose books on Prespa constituted an important source of data; the presentation of Jonovski below is taken from the back cover of his book *Prespa: A Historical Enigma* (2002). The other authors of popular books on Prespa referred to in the discussion are introduced in the following section.

The interviews were conducted between 2006 and 2010, following a semi-structured protocol that was gradually adjusted to match the theoretical sampling purposes. This section presents the Prespiots participating in the interviews in the same sequence as they appear in the analysis below.

> **"Kiril Joakim Jonovski** was born in 1924 in Pretor, on the Eastern coast of Lake Prespa. Since childhood he has fallen in love with Prespa. Among others, he has long been a correspondent from Resen for the Macedonian Radio-Television and Belgrade Television, as well as the newspapers *Nova Makedonija*, *Vecher*, *Borba*, *Osten*, *Komunist*,

Turisticke Novine, *Trudbenik*, and the news agency Tanjug. He practices painting and photography. He is the author of documentary television movies for the island of Golem Grad and *An Eco-Chronicle of Two Centuries* concerning the fluctuation of the water level in Lake Prespa in the period 1952 to 2002. An excellent authority and local historian of his area of birth, in 2000 he published his first monograph about Prespa under the same title and is also the author of a number of reports about Prespa published in the newspaper *Nova Makedonija* in the period from 1987 to 1992.

As an environmental activist he has participated in numerous international symposia and other activities related to the development and protection of Prespa and the two Prespa lakes.

Since 1952 he has developed all of the tourism brochures and other marketing materials about Prespa. He is the designer of the emblem of the municipality of Resen.

As a distinguished activist in tourism and culture, he organized the first archaeological excavations in the area of Prespa. As a retired journalist he lives and works in Pretor" (translation from Macedonian of the note on the author from the back cover: Jonovski 2002).

Miroslav is an ethnic Macedonian man, in his mid-forties, a father of two. His parents were "deported" from the Greek part of Prespa early in their lives, before the end of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), to a country in the communist Eastern Bloc, where they met and later married. Soon after Miroslav was born, they moved to the city of Ohrid, near the Prespa basin, in the Republic of Macedonia. As a child of

"political émigrés" for a long time he was not allowed to visit the Greek part of Prespa, the place of "his origin." He first visited Greece in 1986, as a member of a group of tourists from the Republic of Macedonia; at that time he visited his kin living in the province of Central Macedonia in Greece, but not the Greek part of Prespa. After the 1990s, now that his parents were also allowed to enter Greece, he twice visited the Greek part of Prespa. On one of these trips, Miroslav was accompanied by his parents, who guided him in the area and showed him the places they remembered from the time they were children. His father also took him to the house where he was born and which was still in good shape, although not inhabited at that time. Miroslav's long-standing desire was finally fulfilled. He intends to visit the Greek part of Prespa on a regular basis and is considering filing a request with the Greek government to transfer back the ownership rights of his family house.

Dimitrios is a male Greek in his thirties, a husband and father. He was born in a foreign country where he spent his early childhood. At the age of 10 his parents returned to Greece and settled in a large city. During his studies he met a local woman who was born in the Greek part of Prespa. On one of his visits to the area he was offered work on a project implemented by a non-governmental organization which is active exclusively in Prespa, but which has a strong international network. Soon afterward he married the local woman and they established their own family in the village of her birth. Although he presents himself as an islander, due to the fact that his father was born in a Greek island in the Aegean Sea, Dimitrios also has a sense of belonging to Prespa. He also thinks of himself as being a Prespiot due to the fact that he is married to a local woman with whom he has children who were born in Prespa. In addition to being professionally involved in conservation management in Prespa,

Dimitrios also helps his wife in growing and marketing beans. He intends to reside in Prespa permanently.

Vanngel is an ethnic Macedonian man in his mid-forties, a father of two. He was born in Mala Prespa, in the Albanian part of Prespa, in a village located on the western shore of Greater Prespa Lake. Soon after he graduated from the Faculty of Economy in Tirana, Vanngel was employed on the collective farm near the village of his birth. Shortly after the fall of the communist regime in Albania in 1991, the collective was dissolved. In the following period he held various posts in the local offices of the state administration or local businesses. In addition, he has developed his own business, trading various goods across the Albanian-Macedonian border. In 1997, after the pyramid banking scandal in Albania and the resulting civic unrest in 1996, he decided to emigrate with his family to the Republic of Macedonia and settled in the town of Resen. Eventually he managed to buy his own flat in the town. However, even though he emigrated to Macedonia, most of his professional and business activities continue to take place in the Albanian part of Prespa; he commutes between Resen and Mala Prespa daily. Since 1991 he has been involved in the political life of Mala Prespa with the aim of protecting and advancing the rights and the status of the Macedonian minority living in the Albanian part of Prespa. For several years he held a secretarial post in the local government in the Albanian part of Prespa. He is currently building a new house in his village of birth and plans to move there permanently after he retires.

5.2. *Books about Prespa*

This section briefly introduces the authors of the popular books on Prespa referred to in the discussion below. In their publications the authors explicitly declare themselves

to be Prespiots or express a strong sense of belonging to Prespa. Most of the books presented below were created outside academic and scientific discourses and with the intention to make them available for the general public. Despite the differences in style and content, they provide descriptions of Prespa in varying detail, and usually include information on the physical geography, geology, climate, landscape, demography, economic conditions, cultural heritage and, above all, history.

"Georgios Catsadorakis was born in Athens in 1958. He studied biology at Athens University, where he also completed his PhD on the ecology of birds in Prespa National Park (1983-1990). From 1987 until 1998 he studied the ecology of the two species of pelicans in Prespa as a member of the International Program for the Study and Protection of the Dalmatian Pelican. As a citizen of Prespa and a scientific collaborator of the Society for the Protection of Prespa, he has contributed together with others to the implementation of management measures which resulted in the Dalmatian Pelican colony in Prespa becoming the largest of its kind in the world. He has published over forty scientific papers, twenty of which are related to pelicans and other birds of Prespa. He is the author of the books: *Fish and Fisheries in Prespa* (1996), *Prespa: A Story about Man and Nature* (1996), and *The Natural Heritage of Greece* (1999). In 2001, he was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize for Europe, jointly with Myrsini Malakou, for his contribution to the Prespa cause. He is a founding member of the Hellenic Ornithological Society. He is presently working as a freelance field researcher and, over the last few years, as a scientific advisor for the World Wide Fund for Nature, WWF Greece" ("A Note on the Author," in: Catsadorakis 2002).

"Ilija Chavkalovski was born on 17.06.1941 in the village of Perovo, in the Municipality of Resen. He completed the first four grades of primary school in his village of origin and from the 5th to the 8th grades in the Primary School "Brakja Miladinovci" in the village of Carev Dvor. In the school year 1959-60 he completed his Technical High School education (architectural-civil engineering major) in Skopje. He graduated from the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Skopje in 1996. From 1996 to 2001, the date of his retirement, he worked for the former Yugoslav People's Army and in the civil-engineering service of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia. He finished his postgraduate studies in Physical Planning at the Institute of Geography, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, in Skopje in 1995. His Master's Thesis was entitled "Fluctuations in the Water Level in Lake Prespa and Their Influence on the Planning of the Shoreline." His research in the Prespa basin commenced in 1983 as part of his regular professional tasks.

He has published the following works: *Lake Prespa: Oscillation of the water level* (1997) and *Prespa* (2001)" (translation from Macedonian of "A Note on the Author," in: Chavkalovski 2001).

"Gure Pando Duma was born in 1920 in the village of Globochani, Mala Prespa, the Republic of Albania. He completed his primary school in the village of his birth. The first two grades were taught in Greek and the next two grades in Albanian. This was the case because, at that time, there was an exchange of territories between Albania and Greece. He completed the seventh grade in the village of Pustec. Due to financial

reasons, since he was born to a poor family, he completed his secondary education only in 1964, in the city of Korcha.

In 1935 he was employed as a private teacher, teaching the children of Vlachos families who came to the village of Gorna Gorica to tend the livestock. He taught in Greek and Albanian up to 1942.

In 1942 he was drafted as a soldier by the Italian Army and served in Elbasan and Shengin. In 1943, together with his comrades, he deserted the army and returned home.

In 1948 he was employed as a teacher and lectured in the villages of Globochani, Tuminec and Gorna Gorica.

In 1957, when the collective farms were established, he was appointed president of the collective in the village of Globochani and served until 1966.

In 1966 he was employed as a merchant in the store in the village. Since 1980 he is retired and lives in the city of Pogradec.

This is his first publication and the only one of its kind in the area of Mala Prespa. Gure Duma is one of the best authorities on the history and tradition in Mala Prespa" (translation from Macedonian of the note on the author from the back cover, in: Duma 2007).

"**Vlado Jovanovski** was born in 1935 in the village of Dolno Dupeni in the Municipality of Resen. He finished primary school in the place of his birth, pre-gymnasium in the village of Ljubojno and military high school in Pula (the Republic of Croatia). He studied at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana and Skopje, from which he graduated. He was a

postgraduate student in political science at the Institute for Social and Political-Law Sciences of the "Saint Cyril and Methodius University" in Skopje.

His professional life included service in the Yugoslav navy and the ministries of the interior and defense of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia.

Now is a pensioner living in Skopje. He is engaged in publishing monographs about the past and the present of his home region. In 1994 he published the monograph *Dolno Dupeni – A Village in Prespa*" (translation of "A Note on the Author," in: Jovanovski, 2005).

5.3. *From geographical space to an ethnic place*

The first part of this section will demonstrate how semi-expert theories are used by some of the participants to associate nature with society and culture to construct group identity based on ethnic origin. It also presents examples from written documents where this approach is taken further in order to appropriate and lay claim to specific territory and to emphasize the legitimacy of a particular ethnic identity of the Prespa region. The second part of this section considers narratives on genealogical origin that anchor identity to both the history and geography of the Prespa basin.

The talk of Miroslav is a particularly good example to begin with. When prompted to explain what it means to be a Prespiot, Miroslav identifies two principal reasons: "genetic" continuity and psychological similarity, that is, a shared "mentality." He then explains how the regionally distinctive character of people in Prespa emerged organically from the unique character of the biophysical environment in the Prespa basin. This phenomenon, he believes, is not exclusive to the Prespa

region, but it also applies to any particular territory and to all biological entities. The following extract presents his arguments for the connection between the environment and people:

Extract 24

I cannot escape that. Could be a Debraner[8], but I am not; I am a Prespiot. There are differences there. Possibly the conditions made Debraners to be one or another way, but the conditions in Prespa are different; because of the living conditions. There is a mild climate, that is, a pleasant climate. There are fairly fertile fields. Which means the people didn't suffer from famine; it's a fact, there were unproductive years, etc., but mostly they had the basics for a living. They were not struggling for survival and this is how, probably, they paid more attention to the social issues, such as communication, social relations and art.

Miroslav is explaining his place-based identity by relying on a popular version of the Darwinian theory of evolution. This theory provides him the means for reflection, understanding, evaluating, and constructing accounts of the identity of individuals and communities residing or originating in a particular geographical area. Borrowing the logic of the Darwinian theory, he attributes place-based identity to natural laws and processes. His conscious employment of the scientific reasoning entails a commitment to objectivity. For instance, he is cautious in noting that "every ambient has an effect, so a part of the evolution is slightly different; I am not saying it is better or worse, but it is slightly different." What Miroslav is arguing for is that his identity as a Prespiot is grounded in the landscape, in the ambience created by the

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[8] A person originating from the city or the valley of Debar, a region in the western part of the Republic of Macedonia.

distinct biophysical environment of the region. In other words, the people in the region have adapted to the specific environment by the same evolutionary process that shapes all living things. In the case of humans, he believes, this process extends into the realm of culture. In consequence, Miroslav finds clues about Prespiots' identity in the geography of the basin. This implies a view of the inseparability of nature, society, and ultimately, culture and that one's identity is natural, stable, and fixed in place. Perhaps he maintains that this is transmitted through heredity because, although he was born in an Eastern European country and grew up in the Ohrid region, he still considers him a Prespiot. Arguably, it is only one small step from here to developing strong affective bonds with the region of his ancestors, which then translates into a form of regional patriotism, because, as Miroslav comments, "when I say I identify myself [with Prespa], it sounds proud."

The passages above suggest that the meanings of place are constructed through objective reasoning and creative, affective interpretation. Following Miroslav's arguments, the sense and essence of place intermingle. The power of the landscape, its biophysical features in particular, to mediate both the rational and affective meanings of place is demonstrated in the following extract, also taken from Miroslav's talk:

Extract 25

The first time I saw [the Greek part of Prespa] it literally took my breath away. I was fascinated. So there you have the plain and the lake. That was fascinating to me; it may be not the same with someone else, but it does fascinate me. A plain, lake and mountains – that is, I think, beauty. Fresh water, mountains, fields to be cultivated – most beautiful. Because I was there in May, just in time, they were in blossom, green. I got stuck

there, [at a viewpoint] because I could not drive the car further. … For

me it was incredibly beautiful.

In other words, for Miroslav certain natural features in the landscape have both

causal and aesthetic qualities. In explaining his fascination with the visual qualities of

the landscape he employs various discourses. His visual experience is made

meaningful through a comparative aesthetic evaluation of different, iconic, landscapes

and places, both real and imaginary. Arguably, his aesthetic appreciation of the scenic

is related to travel: "the most beautiful landscape [the Greek part of Prespa], as if you

have been to Dubrovnik,[9] when you sight it for the first time…. something similar."

This gaze on a place, which is spectacular and aesthetically pleasing, can be

emphasized by one further example: "something similar to the American immigrants,

when they travelled to America and suddenly were seeing something very different

from dull Europe." His exaltation of the landscape of his place of origin pushes him to

declare it "heaven." The latter statement has moral implications; it is a place

supporting a desirable way of life. In this way the aesthetics of the landscape and

ideas about society are closely intertwined. The fascination with the visual also

implies a tourist's gaze, which is characterized as a mode of visual consumption and

aestheticization of nature[10] and, therefore, ultimately as ideological (Urry 1995,

Duncan and Duncan 2004, Morton 2007). The following section discusses this point

in depth.

To summarize, Miroslav's talk demonstrates how scientific reasoning and

ideology are at play in interpreting the meanings of the biophysical environment

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[9] Dubrovnik is a city in Croatia, an internationally reknowned tourst destination.
[10] An aestheticized vision of nature emphasizes aesthetic values of nature and obscures a hidden reality characterized by relations of exclusion and exploitation.

connected to a specific place. What Miroslav omits explicating in his elaboration on the identity of Prespa is its (implied) ethnic Macedonian character. Perhaps he considered it all too obvious given the fact that this theme permeated his talk throughout and that he was talking to another ethnic Macedonian (the researcher) in the Macedonian language.

The (ethnic) Macedonian identity of Prespa is elaborated upon in all of the popular books on Prespa written by ethnic Macedonian authors introduced at the beginning of this chapter. In principle, these authors share the view that Prespa is part of the Macedonian ethnic territory. Prespa is conceived of as a whole, an organic entity with a territorial foundation which persisted for more than a millennium, despite the vicissitudes of history. Jovanovski (2005, p. 9) concludes that Prespa is "a natural-geographical, ethnic, economic and cultural whole," that has been divided by three different "state-legal" entities ("creations"). This unity, Jovanovski asserts, has persisted despite numerous attempts by conquerors and empires to change its character by destruction, displacement, colonization, and assimilation, ever since the "Slavo-Macedonian tribes" settled in the region around the 5th-6th century AD. The "core" of the Slavo-Macedonian tribe that inhabited the Prespa region, the Brsiacs, he argues, not only assimilated the previous tribes inhabiting the region, but also endured for more than a millennium and managed to pass on their "ethnic character" to all those who colonized the region. In spite of the vagaries of history, from the early Middle Ages until the present, the Slavo-Macedonian ethnos has, he concludes, has always prevailed. This ethnic group is characterized by its distinctive "lifestyle, traditional clothes, language, beliefs, folklore, traditional customs, physical appearance of the people, the mode of emotional experience, and their sense of belonging to the Macedonian people and state" (Jovanovski, 2005, p. 12). As a result,

he argues, these undeniable facts "speak" of the Slavic character of Prespa. On the other hand, due to the influences from conquerors, but also as a result of the influences of many other factors related to the "overall human and social development," he adds, "the genetic, psychophysical, moral and the cultural constitution" have inevitably been modified over time (Jovanovski, 2005, p. 17). He then goes on to describe in great detail the features of a Prespiot in terms of "physical constitution," "psychological constitution," and "moral constitution."

The construction of Prespa as an ethno-geographic entirety is also prominent in the writings of other ethnic Macedonian authors who declare themselves to be Prespiots. Chavkalovski (2001) asserts that Prespa "as a naturally unitary and indivisible whole is split between three countries" (p. 204), and that this administrative political cleavage, carried out during and after the Balkan Wars of the early 20th century, was "forceful and unjust." Similarly, Jonovski (2002) notes that, at some point in the history, the different parts of the Prespa basin have been called "Gorna Prespa" (Upper Prespa), "Dolna Prespa" (Lower Prespa), and "Mala Prespa" (Little Prespa); however, he asserts, there is no significant difference in "the language, traditional clothes and customs" among these parts of the basin (p. 23). Following the Balkan wars, he notes, "in order to satisfy the appetite to conquer" of the states involved – Serbia, Greece, and Albania – the imperial states allowed them to "tear down the Prespa basin" (p. 23). Jonovski's construction of Prespa's identity as an ethnic place of Orthodox Christian Macedonians is reflected in the published photographs in his books and marketing materials, which almost always tend to concentrate on particular landscape scenery or secular and religious cultural sites to the exclusion of mosques or minarets.

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In his book on Prespa, in the Albanian part of the region, Duma (2007) shares the view that the partitioning of Macedonia in 1913 among Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia was a national disaster that separated Macedonians. He emphasizes that, indeed, Mala Prespa was the most tragic case since it was first granted to Greece following the Treaty of Bucharest of 1913, and then to Albania following the signature of the Albanian Border Treaty in 1926; as a consequence, he notes, the people were repeatedly forced to learn the "languages of those states."

The authors of the popular books on Prespa discussed above, who declare themselves Prespiots of ethnic-Macedonian origin, unanimously agree about the ethnic Macedonian identity of the Prespa basin. There is no shared belief, however, about what exactly the ethnic Macedonian identity is. Jonovski and Jovanovski, drawing on the interpretation and sources cited in publications sponsored by the previous communist government of Macedonia and Yugoslavia, resolutely argue for the Slavic origin of the modern ethnic Macedonians. However, Duma (2007) perhaps intends to challenge this view by referring to stories told by "old men" who had no formal education, but whose narratives, he argues, have been repeatedly confirmed in histories he can read today. He recalls the stories told by elderly people about Alexander the Great, in which he was presented as a deity, sometimes resurrected as Jesus Christ, who assured the people that they were going to be freed from Turkish rule. He also notes that these stories reminded the people that "Greeks want to take Alexander from us, but he is ours and we are not giving him to them" (Duma 2007, p. 18). These introductory passages in his chapter on the history of Mala Prespa, reflect the ongoing heated public debate in the Republic of Macedonia and the Macedonian Diaspora about the ethnic continuity/discontinuity between the ancient Macedonians and the modern ethnic Macedonians. Chavkalovski sides with Duma and argues that

"1000 years ago, right in this space, in Prespa, after some 1200 years since the former (Alexander's) kingdom, the Macedonian state was re-created" (Chavkalovski 2001, p. 171).

It is interesting to note that the construction of the Macedonian ethnos as unitary through history, from antiquity to the present, has been institutionalized in Mala Prespa through the adoption of "the Star of Alexander" as an official emblem of the Municipality of Pustec (Liqenas in Albanian), which includes the territory of Prespa in Albania inhabited by ethnic Macedonians (see Figure 5 below).

Figure 5. The official Emblem of the Municipality of Pustec (Liqenas) in Albanian Prespa (Mala Prespa)

The construction of Prespa's identity as an ethnic place (of Christian Orthodox Macedonians) is closely tied to the establishment of the Kingdom of Samuel, who established his throne on the island of Saint Achilles in Lesser Prespa Lake. The Kingdom of Samuel is given paramount importance in the history of ethnic Macedonians regardless of the different interpretations of the ethnic character of modern Macedonians.

As Jonovski writes in his book on Prespa, "throughout history Prespa is certainly most known as the first capitol of the Kingdom of Samuel" (2002, p. 57). According to these authors, for 40 years, from his base in Prespa, Samuel ruled his kingdom, which stretched from the Danube River to the north, the Rhodope Mountains and Olympus Mountain to the south, the Black Sea to the east, and the Ionian and the Adriatic Seas to the west. After Samuel's coronation, the Metropolitanate of Prespa was declared an archbishopric or patriarchate, later known as the Archbishopric of Ohrid (Dimevski 1989, p. 81). As Dimevski notes, the Archbishopric of Ohrid served as "a basis for national perception and the cradle of the Macedonian revival" (p. 6).

In conclusion, within the wider contemporary narratives and discourse of ethnicity, the authors of these popular books on Prespa contribute to the construction of a unified story of the region's history. The unanimous agreement about the "unjust" disruption of the wholeness of the basin as an ethnic place emphasizes the ethnic (Christian Orthodox Macedonian) identity of Prespa. These writings are examples of the ways in which history and identity can be constituted in geographical space – here the Prespa basin – which in turn affects the identities of the persons and communities residing there. In reading these authors one is reminded that place-making has both spatial (territorial) and temporal (historical) dimensions. The construction of the Prespa basin as an organic whole of geography and history provides for perceptual and cognitive "stability" which then is used to reproduce sets of dominant meanings and representations of the region's identity. These constructions of Prespa are therefore ideological, mobilized in the service of the dominant ethnic group of Christian Orthodox Macedonians. They imply hierarchically defined rights of symbolic appropriation of this territory, of spatial identity, which then serve to stratify

social groups according to their perceived ethnic origin. As a consequence, these constructions of Prespa's identity further the ideals of ethnic homogeneity, marginalizing counter-narratives of social and cultural diversity.

But how was the "wholeness" and "unity" of Prespa eventually dissolved into ethnic/national territories? Catsadorakis (1999) notes that, "when the Treaty of Bucharest was signed in 1913, what is now the Greek part of Prespa became once and for all part of Greece and the frontiers were secured" (p. 18). Catsadorakis (1999) notes that up to the Civil War in Greece (1944 – 1949), the Greek part of Prespa was divided into Upper Prespa and Lower Prespa. The eight villages in the Upper Prespa were "inhabited from way back by Albanians or by people closely related to them" (Catsadorakis 1999, p. 25). Catsadorakis (1999) also noted that this division "corresponds to historical and political fact" (p. 25) and adds the following:

> Although it does not strike you at first glance, a careful observer comparing geological and political maps of the region suddenly realizes that this division coincides almost exactly with the boundaries of the two geological substrates in the region. Upper Prespa, with the exception of Mikrolimni and Oxia, is coextensive with the limits of the limestone, Lower Prespa with the igneous, granitic rock. Who knows how far back in time, either in legend or in history, the connection between this political and the physical environment goes? (p. 25).

In his book on Prespa, Catsadorakis recollects the times when he was walking "the mule paths" leading from one village to another and yielding to the imagination, picturing to himself Prespa with its villages and houses "with its peasant culture and footpaths" (1999, p. 26). Although he is not sure how credible his picture of Prespa in

the past was, he eloquently conveys his meaning of contemporary Greek Prespa with its 12 villages:

> Surrounded as it is by high mountains and with all its villages contained within the same basin, Prespa has a distinctive character both as a region and as a group of communities. Each village has a dual nature. On the one hand, each has its own particular color and appearance; on the other, each can be seen as a part of the greater whole, which is Prespa. What is more, when you ask a Prespiote where he comes from, he will tell you first that he comes from Prespa and then from the village. Which goes to show that Prespa is not just a geographical area. It is a single community, whose quarters, albeit separated from each other, are comprised of different villages (Catsadorakis 1999, p. 25).

Within this discourse, the biophysical environment provides a reflection against which identity at individual and collective levels can be mapped and experienced. It is due to these qualities that the region can act as a means of shaping conceptions and producing experiences of self and identity. In other words, in these narratives discussed above, spatial domination is organized along the axis of ethnic origin, that is, of blood/genetic lineage.

The last point is particularly relevant to the construction of personal identity through ancestry. Indeed, ancestry is the crucial defining feature of personal identity to both Kiril and Miroslav. Kiril's account of his "very ancient ancestry" is particularly good example. Kiril traces his ancestors to one pivotal time and place in the history of the region and ethnic Macedonians: the Kingdom of Samuel. He locates his ancestor via a durable and venerable family surname ("Sudjovci") which means, in

his interpretation, "councilors." This family surname is reckoned by descent from a legendary common ancestor – Simeon – a distinguished councilor of Tsar Samuel, from whom Kiril traces his descent, as explained in the extract below.

Extract 26

My great grandfather, whose surname we bear, in fact his pseudonym, was *sudjo* [meaning 'judge']. The old surname of my lineage is *Sudjovci* although my surname is Jonov, after my great-grandfather. Simeon, the eldest great-grandfather, who made the origin of our lineage famous, was a nobleman and councilor of the tsar, because it was common that noblemen were councilors of the tsar. Simeon was taken from his parents by Tsar Samuel himself when he was a twelve-year-old boy.

Kiril then goes on to tell a long story of how his great-grandfather Simeon was chosen to become Samuel's distinguished nobleman and how the genealogy of his family has been recorded over a period of one millennium. This fictional story exemplifies the construction of personal identity defined by generational continuity.

In identifying his family roots, Kiril constructs historical continuity with the past that endows him with an inheritance bestowed by generations of distinguished predecessors. At the same time, this narrative of family history accounts for places and locations of major events in the lives of Samuel and Kiril's distinguished ancestors as well as material traces that can still be located in the landscape, such as the remains of churches, palaces or military facilities built by Samuel or his descendants. In this way, the geography of Prespa provides Kiril with a way of thinking about and constructing his sense of self.

Kiril's narrative links family and a sense of continuity through ancestry, via his membership in a noble lineage, to the history of an ethnic group – Christian Orthodox Macedonians. Ethnicity and social status are reckoned by descent from a legendary common ancestor from whom he traces his descent. This is achieved by a reconstruction of the region's history that positions his ancestors within the larger historical narrative of (Slavo-)Macedonians, from the Kingdom of Samuel, through the Ilinden Uprising[11] to the present. In both cases it strengthens his sense of belonging to Prespa. Thus, family history is a source for emotive attachment to Prespa.

Kiril's genealogical narrative is deeply rooted in the region. This genealogy, centered on the Prespa basin, creates iconic elements in the landscape, such as the island of Saint Achilles – the capitol of the Kingdom of Samuel and the village of Pretor – a major military base of Samuel – and others. They anchor historical memory but also frame his geography of everyday life. He spent all of his life in Pretor, which, as Kiril presents, "was a large settlement since antiquity" and during the early Middle Ages because of its strategic position in Prespa and because of the important role Prespa played throughout history. Arguably, the linking of genealogical narrative to the landscape of Prespa is an important constituent of a local sense of place and place identity.

In conclusion, in analyzing the relationships that contribute to Kiril's sense of belonging to Prespa, two threads are prominent. On the one hand, ancestral history provides for conscious integration of the construction and representations of Kiril's own social status and identity. His family history is a personalization of the history of

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[11] The Macedonian revolt against the Turks, known as the Ilinden (St. Elijah's Day) Uprising, started on July 20 (August 2), 1903, with the goal of establishing an independent Macedonian republic.

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the region and also of ethnic Macedonians. Perhaps this explains why he proudly mentions that he was the model for a distinguished Macedonian artist in painting his popular portrait of Tsar Samuel. In addition, through his distinguished contribution to the recent modernization of Prespa by promoting tourism, as the next section demonstrates, Kiril has made an equally memorable contribution to the region's identity. Kiril's modern self-concepts, based on identification with his career as a promoter of tourism in the region, are complemented by his noble descent from within the region.

5.4. *Branding Prespa*

This section discusses how the participants in this research, Prespiots in their popular books, and the media in Macedonia represent/brand Prespa as a region having competitive advantages in the regional and global market of tourism and agricultural products such as apples. The discourses on Prespa as a popular tourist destination and apple-growing area initially surfaced during the interview with Kiril, at the beginning of the second phase of this research. The protocol for this interview was designed to elicit narratives about the self and Prespa by asking the participant to tell of his experiences and concepts about the basin. Kiril's first reaction to the interview question was to present a rather detailed account of his life. This interview therefore lends further support to the previous inference that place is a useful concept in organizing one's recollection and presentation of personal experience and that this relationship between place and self also operates at higher spatial scales. The following is an extract from the beginning of his talk:

Extract 27

The researcher: I am interested; could you please tell me about how you experience Prespa personally?

Kiril: Well. Now, I do not know where to start, because I was born here and have reached a very old age. In ten days I will be 82 years old. … I was born in 1924 on August 22 in the village of Pretor and have spent all of my life here, except during military service.

Then he goes on to tell his life story predominantly structured by the turning points in the course of his professional career. After finishing his military service in 1947, Kiril assumed various posts in the local administration and played an important role in organizing cultural associations and events in the Prespa region of the Republic of Macedonia. In 1953 he initiated the establishment of an association for tourism called "Prespa" with the aim of promoting and developing tourism in the region. This became a personal mission for the rest of his life:

Extract 28

Kiril: Beginning from 1952/1953 until the present days, tourism has been in my heart, in my soul. It means a lot to me; it is satisfaction for all that I have done in the field of marketing and organizing different activities. All the tourism marketing materials that have been published since the inception of tourism from 1952/53 up to 1985, all the published materials are of my own authorship. They include texts and photographs as well as drawings on various posters. Because I was a journalist, through various written texts affiliated with different editor's offices with which I cooperated, including Macedonian Television and Belgrade

Television, my contribution to tourism, my contribution to tourism in Prespa, is indeed great. Well, it is certainly not modest to mention it personally, but the facts speak for themselves. This is why I say it satisfies me; because I feel tourism is my preoccupation, a life-long preoccupation.

Kiril's life-long project of tourism development in the Macedonian part of Prespa has been informed by an elaborated construct of region's identity. In his construction of Prespa as a tourist destination two prominent themes stand out, both in his interview and his writings. First, his narratives are informed by both aesthetic (contemplative) and instrumental (exploitative) views of "nature". In explaining the potentials of Prespa as a tourist destination in the interview he speaks of "the natural beauties of Prespa," and particularly of the "beauty of Lake Prespa," and its four islands. These are complemented by the dense vegetation of the surrounding mountains framing the basin, as well as the wide sandy beaches "round the lake." The natural components in this image of Prespa also include the "mild climate," which is praised for its beneficial effects on human health," "clean air," "the unpolluted environment," and the "natural" connections (such as mountain saddles) connecting the Prespa basin with the adjacent regions in Albania (Korca), Greece (Florina/Lerin) and Macedonia (the Lake Ohrid region and the city of Bitola on the Pelagonia Plain). Second, In depicting the landscape of the region, this layer of idealized natural beauty is overlaid by strokes of cultural tones, such as the rural ambience of the small villages and the numerous churches and monasteries around the lakeshore and high up in the mountains surrounding Prespa. The construction of the beauty in the Prespa landscape involves co-operative interaction between nature and society. In other words, the landscape of Prespa is constructed from a synthesis of elements in the

biophysical environment, both "natural" and man-made, which together contribute to the construction of the region's distinct character.

His construct selectively captures aspects of nature and culture through visual abstraction and representation. The re-presentation of Prespa in his interview symbolically flattens the social, cultural and the biophysical environment of the region that make it an inherently unique place. Arguably, this construction reshapes it so it can fit preordained market categories to satisfy the needs of the perceived consumers. Notably, his narrative on Prespa's identity is void of such features of the landscape as the extensive reed belts and thickets of riparian vegetation, wetlands, rivers, and vast tracts of cultivated land.

With its unique combination of nature and culture, Kiril asserts, Prespa holds great potential to become a world tourism center. However, he concludes sadly, most of the facilities and infrastructure developed in the past are now abandoned and dilapidated. In addition, he believes, people in Prespa are not capable of promoting the region in the international tourism market on their own. In his view, there are also some external factors preventing Prespa from becoming an international tourist destination, such as the national borders that cross the region, the lack of political will on the part of the governments of the three countries sharing the region, and the lack of investment. There are reasons for optimism, asserts Kiril, boosted by some recent developments in the region. Most of all, the establishment of the Prespa/Ohrid Euroregion carries, in his view, prospects for opening the borders and thus increasing the area's international importance. These efforts, he adds, receive significant support from another initiative, that is, the proclamation of Transboundary Prespa Park in 2000, proclaimed by the prime ministers of the three countries sharing the region. The

positive effects of these initiatives, he notes, are confirmed by the fact that a Portuguese company has expressed an interest in investing in the tourism sector in the Macedonian part of Prespa; he expects such an investment to attract the attention of "capable managers from abroad." Taken together, Kiril believes that these initiatives provide for constructing an identity of the region which will make it possible to form allegiances with regard not to shared traditions, kinship and ethnicity, language or geographic proximity, but to the profit-based marketing strategies of private enterprise.

To summarize, in Kiril's talk Prespa is constructed in a particular way, determined by a supposed significance conferred by the presence of urbanites, in particular those from the developed Western world. The "beautiful nature" of Prespa is aestheticized, that is, turned into a commodity and offered to tourists, foreigners in particular, who are "fed up with hotels for vacation and recreation" and prefer to stay in an ambience they miss in their cities of concrete and asphalt.

Over time, Kiril's representations of Prespa as a tourist destination have been subject to some modifications that reflect the development in the tourism sector in the region and also adapt them to changes in the tourism market. In his posters advertising Prespa during the 1970s and 1980s (Jonovski 2002, p. 169) the above-mentioned themes of nature and culture are accompanied by a third one, constructing Prespa as a "modern" tourism destination, offering such opportunities as large resort hotels, water skiing, boat sailing, winter skiing, etc. These are, however, omitted in his interview and ideas of "rural" or "alternative" tourism activities are introduced instead. His representation of Prespa's identity has also been expressed graphically in his design of the official emblem of the Municipality of Resen, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 6.   The official emblem of the Municipality of Resen

Article 7 of the Municipality of Resen Charter provides the following interpretation of the emblem (MoR 2010):

The municipality has an emblem representing the Prespa basin with an inscription "Prespa" on a ribbon above, with mountains above which the sun rises, the lake with the island of Golem Grad and a sailing boat in it and an apple fruit with two diverging branches. The emblem of the municipality is a symbol of a historical, tourist, and fruit-growing area.

For the moment it suffices to note that Kiril ignored Prespa as a "fruit growing area" in his interview. This section returns to that issue in the last part.

The representation of Prespa in Kiril's books closely follows the conventions of academic and expert literature, most notably in the field of geography, accompanied by an account of human history. In his first book on Prespa (Jonovski 2000), described the region as a "picturesque basin" and Lake Prespa is introduced as

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"one of the cleanest lakes in the world," without elaborating the meanings of such qualities.

Overall, Kiril's perspective on Prespa is lake-centric, perhaps bespeaking his identification with the village of Pretor on the eastern shore of Greater Prespa Lake, where his antecedents lived for more than a millennium. The relationships between his personal identity, his family origin, and the history of Prespa, and also with the Macedonian nation, were discussed in much detail in the preceding section. For the present discussion it can be noted that his personal identity as a "tourism activist," fuelled by numerous formal and informal acknowledgements, is closely related to his construction of Prespa as a remarkable tourist destination.

Being a productive and devoted activist in the making of Prespa as a popular tourist destination, Kiril has shaped the discourses on Prespa's identity for many decades, which other authors of popular books and news articles acknowledge (Nikolovski-Katin 1996, Deliso 2008, Angelovska 2009). Drawing on a range of written documents, Kiril has mastered a respectable body of data and information on the geography and history of the Prespa region as a whole. His personal experience of the region, however, seems to be largely confined to the Macedonian part of Prespa.

With a view toward the conclusions presented in the previous chapter, the lack of personal experience with the biophysical and social environment in other parts of Prespa is relevant for the analysis of Kiril's presentation of Prespa. Following this clue, the participants in the later stage of this research were selected from among those who have experienced Prespa beyond the national borders. Also, during the interview the participants were regularly prompted to tell of their experience of Prespa as a geographical whole.

The data collected following Kiril's interview provide additional clues about the construction of Prespa as a tourist destination. Miroslav's talk is particularly rich in detail about Prespa's identity as an area of tourism. Prompted to describe Prespa to an imagined audience having no prior knowledge of the region, Miroslav immediately assumes the role of a tourism marketing agent. Similarly to Kiril's approach, nature is at the core of his construct. In his view, the Prespa region is a "pristine," undeveloped landscape, "a nature reserve," a place of unpolluted environment and sandy beaches surrounded by high mountains. It is a place of "open, hospitable people." This opens the way for Prespa, Miroslav believes, to sustainable development in the future as an "eco-center" of unspoiled nature and balanced land development. Miroslav, like Kiril, presents Prespa by selectively placing his focus on aspects of "nature" and society.

His construction of Prespa's identity as a place of pristine nature is based on his personal experience of both the Macedonian and the Greek parts of the basin, and most importantly, through a comparison with the Ohrid Region. Miroslav sadly concludes that the city of Ohrid, where he has spent most of his life, has been "raped" by uncontrolled development, especially along the shores of the lake, losing its identity as the most beautiful city in the country. The identity of Prespa as a tourism destination is thus built through a comparison with the adjacent Ohrid region, which tourists coming to the wider region currently prefer over Prespa, as explained in the following extract:

Extract 29

Miroslav: I think this is a critical moment. Over the years, Prespa is going to be in the focus again. Because in Ohrid the beaches have become overcrowded following urban expansion, people are going to

start looking for other places. Thus, we have expelled the Dutch tourists for no other reason than the destruction of nature. They were coming to Ohrid because of the wild beaches, to see them and swim in natural beauty. They certainly have more concrete and landscaping. Well, this is what Prespa can offer. This is how Prespa may become attractive. It is not an accident that Aquapura selected this particular area, Prespa and Galicica Mountain.

To Miroslav, the attractiveness of Prespa reflects his anti-urbanism, provoked by the "loss" of Ohrid as he knew it. For him Prespa is close to a state of "pristine nature;" there is a relative absence of people and the environment is unplanned. The construction of the beauty in the Prespa landscape involves co-operative interaction between nature and society; this construct posits the increasingly urban environment of the Ohrid region in opposition to the "natural beauty" of Prespa.

Prespa, in the view of these speakers, possesses a remarkable or distinctive landscape. For both Kiril and Miroslav, "natural beauty" constitutes an object of their gaze; their aesthetic judgment of Prespa fixes upon nature. Both of them understand "nature" as scenery, a view from a particular perspective predicated on perceptual sensation. They gaze upon the landscape of Prespa as if it were an object and its constituting elements, such as the lake and the mountains, in some ways stand out or speak to them. The biophysical environment as landscape is read as spectacular. The identity of Prespa in these constructs typically concerns visual qualities of the landscapes, in particular the presumed pictorial seduction of travelers and tourists. Particular elements in the landscape, such as the lake and the mountains, but not the wetlands and the agricultural fields, are seen from a specific point of view.

It does not follow from this, however, that only physical phenomena possess such an aura of distinctiveness. Both Kiril and Miroslav add cultural and social phenomena. Ultimately, the biophysical environment and people are made tourist objects. In this way the landscape is embellished for aesthetic appropriation. Their gaze speaks about how it is to be appropriated and exploited; it implicates visual consumption by tourists. In this context Miroslav and Kiril explain the potential of Prespa to forge a distinctive image that will prove attractive to capital, to highly skilled prospective employees, and, ultimately, to more visitors.

The aesthetic qualities of Prespa's landscape therefore perform a crucial role, establishing ways of feeling about and perceiving the region. As the analysis above demonstrates, this construction of Prespa's identity tends to read the biophysical environment as a landscape. The objectification of the basin, made of elements thought of as objects, opens the way for its commodification. Through the process of commodification, these elements and features of the landscape enter into exchange relationship with the tourist (purchaser) who accords to them a market value regardless of their use value (Urry 1995, Cosgrove 2003). As a result, these participants tend to select those elements in the landscape which make Prespa seem different from others competing for the same market share. Therefore, to understand how the identity of Prespa is constructed by these speakers it is necessary to set the region in its wider geographical context. Indeed, Kiril's and Miroslav's presentations outlined above suggest that the identity of Prespa is constructed out of interaction on a larger scale than the basin itself. The neighboring region of Ohrid, involved in both competition and mutual articulation, is the best immediate comparison. It is important to note that this approach is regularly reflected in the public discourse in Macedonia, as shown by the following extract from a national daily newspaper:

Extract 30

Could it happen that the Prespa region is taking over the primacy in tourism from Ohrid, to become the most modern tourism complex in Macedonia? If it is judged upon the optimism that has overwhelmed the people in the Resen-Prespa area after plans were revealed for the development of a luxurious tourist settlement on the shores of Prespa Lake, in Oteshevo and Carina, worth between 40 and 50 million Euros, then such an epilogue may be expected. The readiness of the local government in Resen to embrace to the maximum the ideas of a rich investor from Portugal, the consortium "Aquapura and Villas," encourages the local populace to hope ever more that something is going to change soon in their lives (Angelovska 2006).

The construction of Prespa's identity as a tourist destination derives partly from the distinctive features of the region such as its sandy beaches, but also from its modest development relative to that in the Ohrid region, the proximity of large urban areas (Bitola and Prilep in Macedonia), which, when juxtaposed produce effects that would not have happened otherwise and in other times. More specifically, these relations interact with and take on a further element of specificity from the accumulated history of Prespa as a tourist area during socialist times which relied on less expensive infrastructure. They also are mindful of the links with the wider world, of global capital movement, as illustrated by the reference to the Portuguese investors from Aquapura and Villas. Thus, the construction of the identity of Prespa as a distinctive place, of natural beauty and hospitality, a place worthy of attention from travelers from around the world, is achieved through both counterposition to the outside, such as the Ohrid region, and, in part, in cooperation with that outside, the

international tourism and capital markets, which therefore become part of what constitutes Prespa. In sum, understanding the identity of Prespa is constructed by linking the region to places beyond. The following extract from Miroslav's talk is a good example:

Extract 31

Aquapura is a company of quite rich Portuguese, allegedly aristocrats owning copper mines in Argentina and many other places in South America. As far as I could learn from the people who brought them here, they have selected some ten sites in the world, on the planet, chosen so they can have private places for vacations, on their own. And they got interested in this part because they wanted it as a private property, where they can come and relax. It wasn't chosen by accident. If they have traveled the globe and selected ten – it doesn't matter, even if it were 100 – one of them is this part. Thus, it certainly was important to them. And they still keep it for them and plan to develop it. It is obvious that the natural beauty of this place was influential. …. Well, we need to understand what it is that we possess.

Kiril and Miroslav both predicate tourist development in Prespa on similar grounds. There are, however, some important differences. Although Miroslav shares with Kiril the vision of Prespa as an international tourist destination, he believes it can be achieved by offering an alternative to the current mass tourism in the Ohrid region. On the other hand, Kiril still seems to be hoping for masses of tourists flooding Prespa as was the case during the 1970s and 1980s.

Undoubtedly, the image of Prespa as a tourist destination matching Ohrid dominates the discourse about the future of tourism in Prespa. It is often about reviving the old identity of Prespa and its "golden years" in tourism, when, during the 1970s and 1980s, tens of thousands of workers flooded the resorts built by socialist companies in Yugoslavia. Recent newspaper articles strikingly reflect this view:

Extract 32

The long hot summer has brought about its effects. Tourism facilities along Prespa Lake are completely full. In the auto camp 'Krani' there are demands for extra beds. The number of people on summer vacation in Oteshevo is also satisfactory. There are also no places in the private hotels and it is difficult to find a room in the villages where rural tourism is being developed. Pretor has the outlook of summer resorts appreciated by all. There are up to 15 000 visitors during the weekends. This may be called a tourism boom in the second largest tourism center in the country – Prespa. Such a high visitation was not expected even by the biggest optimists. However, in addition to the hot summer, the maintenance of last year's prices is also contributing, although the largest influence, tourism workers claim, has been the landscaping of the beaches. Whatever, one is more than certain. Prespa is regaining its past recognizable tourism shine (Vecher 2005).

Extract 33

In the golden age of Prespa, before the 80s, there were from 250 000 to 300 000 visitors annually in this area. The former mass working-class tourism now is reduced to the 10 000 overnights realized last year.

The idea is to revive the former beaches and camping sites where the youngsters hung out together and partied under the open sky till the early morning hours. With the return of the water the possibility for success is rising for most of the ongoing projects which aim to revive dormant space and develop rural, alternative and agro-tourism so that local economic development will be achieved (Trpchevska 2006).

Extract 34

The Prespa tourism workers are satisfied by the tourist season this year because all capacities are booked up to August 25. Among the domestic tourists who come most are from Prilep, Bitola and Skopje, there are a few foreigners from Holland, Israel, Poland and France. The foreigners seem to miss some minor things, but cannot hide that they are surprised by the wonderful nature and the Macedonian cuisine (Marjanovikj 2010).

What is implied in the extracts above may be called cheap mass-produced beachside holiday tourism. That is the tourism of the same sort as displayed on the "tourist posters about Prespa" from the "golden age," which were "completely designed" by Kiril, as noted in his book, *Prespa*. The photos accompanying the news articles cited above and those presented in Kiril's book show beachside hotels and restaurants, overcrowded beaches on a sunny summer's day where young men and women sunbathe or convivially engage in beach volleyball and water sports; speed boats pull water skiers in the background. Beaches are ready to receive as many weekend tourists from the large cities as possible.

In general, the hope for the revival of tourism in Prespa is certainly related to the concept of regional development. For, as Angelovska (2006) clearly points out

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(see Extract 40 above), the expected investment by "Aquapura and Villas" "encourages ever more the local populace to hope that something is going to change soon in their lives." On closer reflection, the participants in this research, and also the above-cited authors, seem to advocate or want to harness tourism as a tool for development of the region. However, although tourism provides a means for development, Prespa faces strong competition from the Ohrid region. In this competition Prespa needs to offer something different, as the following extract argues:

Extract 35

Do you share the impression that we regularly experience Prespa and Ohrid together, as something inseparable, something similar: lake here – lake over there, resorts here – resorts over there, Galicica here – Galicica over there? But Galicica is the turning point, making you notice the difference, as if it were a forbidden apple we usually do not dare to taste, being consistent and disciplined in our conformity and the lethargy brought by everyday life.

Take those 27 kilometers from Trpejca to Stenje and it will suddenly become clear to you – passing to the Prespa half the sand along the coast becomes yellow, the sky is traversed by birds, the view towards the lake is spontaneously focused on Golem Grad island, the landscape feels more tame and the pace of life more comfortable.

October is the ideal period to feel the peak of this difference – a seamless horizon packed with apple trees. This time we take you to the birthplace of the famous Prespa apples (Markovski 2008).

This author reminds one of the interpretation of the official emblem of the Municipality of Resen, stating that it is "is a symbol of a historic, tourist and fruit-growing area" (see above). The construction of the identity of Prespa as a "fruit growing area" probably predates that of Prespa as a tourism destination and certainly has a much longer history. The construction of the identity of Prespa as a "fruit growing area" resembles that of Prespa as an important tourist destination in many respects. The commodification of the region in the former instance is straightforward, as the following newspaper article clearly indicates:

Extract 36

The Prespa apple needs to be a protected brand, because the water, the air make it unique in its distinctiveness.

Reseners send packages of apples to celebrate the New Year to more than 45 addresses such as embassies, media and tourist agencies. The aim of this practice before the holiday is to promote the best of Prespa – apples which make their way to market under the motto 'Yes, we are Balkaners but our apples are European.' With these packages the local government in cooperation with the 'Pelican' Tourist Agency and the 'Fishing Village' intend to promote the Prespa area as a tourist destination and fruit growing area" (Stevkovska 2006).

The market value of this brand, and of Prespa as a fruit growing area, is significant. In his popular article on Prespa as a fruit growing area in Macedonia, the academic geographer Gramatnikovski – another Prespiot – concludes: "Although the fruit-growing area in the landscape of the Prespa basin occupies only 12.63% of the arable land, its importance for the economy is primary" (1965). Moreover, he seems

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to relate this fact to identity when writing that "the population is not rural in the old meaning of the word, because through the fruit growing and some other industrial crops intended for market they satisfy all their remaining living needs" (Gramatnikovski 1965). The idea of progress through industrial/capitalist production is therefore related to the identity of the region. However, the image of Prespa as a fruit-growing area does not easily accommodate that of Prespa as an international tourist destination. When prompted to reflect on the possible conflicts between his construction of Prespa and the well established narrative in Macedonia of Prespa as a region of apple production, Kiril brings forward two major problems:

> *Extract 37*
>
> **Kiril**: by disposing of agrochemicals and the packaging of these toxic chemicals, and also by washing the sprinklers, as well as the irrigation network, all of that drains into the lake, and if not directly, through the groundwater; all that phosphorous, all of it goes into the lake. Not immediately but in time it will become evident that the lake is affected.

Clearly, Kiril is aware of some of the critical ecological processes in the Prespa basin which, however, could not be easily captured by his ecologically indifferent categories describing nature in the region, such as "natural beauty" and "mild climate." In Kiril's and Miroslav's constructions of Prespa as a tourist destination, the natural beauty and the healthy natural environment were prominent to the point that the environmental degradation was underestimated and even ignored. The conflicting constructs of Prespa as a tourist destination and fruit-growing area tend to be reconciled through such ideas and concepts as rural-, alternative- and eco-tourism, as indicated in Extract 33 (above).

The different constructs of Prespa's identity discussed in the preceding passages, though often focusing explicitly on the Prespa basin in its entirety, that is, its geographic boundaries, are nevertheless partial and in some cases clearly apparently one-sided. As already noted, Kiril's personal experience and professional engagement in the region are uneven, with the latter being confined to the Macedonian part of the region. Also, following the references listed in his publications he shows limited interest of and familiarity with Greek and Albanian sources. Taken together, these facts may account for the largely Macedonia-centered construct of Prespa's identity as an international tourism destination, although, as shown in the previous section, other considerations are also relevant. In Miroslav's case, this is less apparent even though his personal involvement in the region has also been uneven.

Similarly, due to the language barrier this analysis is based largely upon interview data and written sources in Macedonian and to a lesser extent in English. From the available data, however, it is possible to identify an additional construct of Prespa's identity, equally partial and confined to Greek Prespa only, which may be reliably introduced under the heading of this section. Indeed, the following paragraph taken from another book on Prespa, this time authored by a Greek, points to another brand of Prespa – as a wetland of international importance:

Extract 38

In the course of its long but relatively insignificant history, Prespa has twice emerged from remoteness and isolation into the limelight. The first time was a thousand years ago when Samuel, tsar of the Bulgars, established his palace and the centre of his kingdom here. The second is

the period we are going through today, when Prespa with its rich wetland

habitat full of rare birds and animals, with its idyllic beauty and

biodiversity, its historic monuments and its people, has secured a place

in the consciousness of thousands of our fellow citizens as one of the

principle sites in Europe for the protection of birds and as one of the

significant areas for our common European natural heritage

(Catsadorakis 1999, p. 9).

Perhaps it is possible to argue that constructing Prespa as a site of "European

natural heritage" may be credibly related to the above discussion of the

commodification of the landscape, this time intended primarily for a somewhat

narrower category of tourists and the nature-based tourism market niche. Expanding

this analysis so as to bring the ideas of nature and the environment into its focus

would be beneficial for the purposes of this research. Indeed, discourses on

environmental protection and nature conservation were regularly employed by the

participants in the second phase of the research and are not exclusively related to the

theme of tourism and regional development, as some of the extracts above indicate

(e.g., see Extract 37 above). The following section takes a closer look at the

relationship between the biophysical environment and construction of regional

identity through an analysis of narratives and discourses on environmental protection,

nature conservation, and sustainable development.

5.5. *A place for man and nature*

Notions such as *nature*, *environment*, and *ecosystem* are regularly employed by both

the participants who possess knowledge of the natural sciences as professionals and

those who are familiar with their common-sense analogues. While this knowledge

provides for their capacity to strategically construct Prespa's identity, it must be understood as it intersects with broader narratives of place and self.

Among the Macedonian participants the discourses informed by notions of nature and environment regularly concern the issue of water level fluctuation in Greater Prespa Lake. This has been subject to various interpretations and heated debate for the last two decades in the context of its effects on tourism in the region and, perhaps most importantly, the related construction of Prespa's identity as a modern tourist destination. For Miroslav, the change is all apparently a "natural" process so that attempts at literal conservation on aesthetic or other grounds will contradict what is understood as "nature knows best." Recollecting his memories of camping at the lakeshore since his childhood, Miroslav tells of his personal experience of water-level fluctuations in the lake:

Extract 39

It was some 7 or 8 years ago, maybe even more, I cannot remember exactly when it was. But I recall the first picture I gathered, those piers at Oteshevo, used for jumping in the water, to swim – they were on dry land. Literally, the lake had retreated some twenty meters and was overgrown by vegetation, rather thick, and inside the lake after the lake retreated. And then I wondered whether there is a way to bring it back … Maybe nature will resolve the problem the best. And it turned out that it solved it. There has been more abundant precipitation in the last years. I think it returned to a more normal level. Also, what could we possibly do? Maybe it is the best to act by not acting, not interfering at all and leaving nature on its own.

Water level fluctuation in the lake is geographically and historically relative. The most dramatic effects can be observed in the shallower parts of the lake, the eastern shore in particular, and where the long, wide beaches of yellow sand are most abundant. These popular sites for mass beach tourism had to be made and re-made repeatedly as the unpredictable lake rose and fell over a period of a few years. The following newspaper articles describe the severity of the consequences and reactions of the locals:

Extract 40

The last years the retreat of the water in the lake makes the Pretor beach useless. Nature in this case is the biggest enemy to some of the concessionaires who struggle to revive the beach and the settlement in general (Marjanovikj 2010).

Extract 41

MSc Ilija Chavkalovski, who was born near Prespa Lake and, as an expert, for many years has followed its life, says that the present consequences could be seen with the naked eye. Storks do not come near the lake anymore and the crows do not land on its shores. Instead, in the little jungle that is being created near the lake following its retreat, wolves and foxes are hiding (Cvetanoski 2008b).

Extract 42

Almost the entire shoreline is overgrown by reeds, undergrowth and willows that each day conquer the space after the retreat of the water. Only the shoreline at the newly constructed beaches is clean, but they

also need to be re-arranged each year after the retreat of the water (Cvetanoski 2008a).

As Miroslav's reasoning indicates (see Extract 39, above), the water level fluctuation challenges human capacities to cope with changes in the environment. Although hesitating, Miroslav ultimately endorses the idea that "nature knows best." In order to make meaning of the situation, Kiril sets it in historical perspective. Drawing upon historical documents, scientific literature, local narratives, and his personal interpretation of human history in the basin, Kiril concludes that "it happened many times through the centuries that the water retreated the same way, due to long period of drought." Moreover, in his book *Prespa: A Historical Enigma* (2002) he reconstructs the environmental history of the Prespa basin to account for the frequent dislocation of villages throughout history and the recent emergence of the remains of buildings previously inundated and unknown to the locals or archaeologists. Duma (2007) reports a similar argumentation used by the locals in their interpretation of the reasons behind the dislocation of some of the villages in Mala Prespa. In the Greek part of Prespa, however, according to Catsadorakis (1999), the relocation of villages was due to malaria.

Perhaps these historical accounts are intended to argue that humans have to adapt to the capricious character of the lake. There are, however, those among the scientists and local officials who believe humans can and should cope with the unpredictability of nature by direct intervention. The following extract from a newspaper article reports on the actions considered by officials in the local government:

Extract 43

There is information from the local government that a project is underway to assess the water balance, the reasons for the decline, and identification of concrete measures in order to regulate and prevent the outflow of Prespa Lake. Partly the reasons for the decrease of the water level are the irrigation systems in Greece, Albania, and Macedonia that annually extract about three centimeters of water (Trpchevska 2006).

The extract above clearly conveys the belief held by local officials in the powers of science, technology, and planning to understand and subjugate this phenomenon to the needs and the dynamics of society and the local economy, rather than merely adapting to it. Thus, for the last decade there has been strong support from local government for various projects contributing to the understanding of how water level changes depend upon climate, atmosphere, land use, and so on.

The scientist Ilija Chavkalovski has been long involved in research and the development of policies concerning the water level fluctuation in the Prespa lakes. As a geographer he has made valuable contributions to understanding the hydrology and the water balance of the Prespa lakes. As a devoted Prespiot, expressing a strong sense of place and attachment to Prespa, he regularly participates in the public debate and the policy circles at the local, national, and transboundary level. He authored a popular book, *Prespa*, which is, he explains, "for the most part technical (terminologically)" (Chavkalovski 2001, p. 8). Yet, it is suffused with affection and a sense of place, as the following extract, taken from the introduction of the book shows clearly:

Extract 44

It [the book] presents Prespa, the Prespa basin, in its real borders. It is beautiful, however; sadly, even today its most beautiful parts are not accessible. Let us hope that soon 'the heart will soften' to relax the three borders and that it will be possible to see the beauties and enjoy them. I wish that so much (Chavkalovski 2001, p. 8).

In his books he focuses on presenting current scientific knowledge primarily concerning the hydrology of basin, including available long-term data on water abstraction in the three countries sharing the basin. There is consent among the scientists, he argues, about the fact that, in the second half of the 20th century, man, in all of three countries has "interfered" in the natural order, "more than is allowed" and "created a mess." Nonetheless, Chavkalovski has the impression that man "doesn't want to hear nor see" the consequences of his acts. He sees no other way to coordinate and regulate water abstraction in the three countries except through transboundary cooperation in order to prevent the looming disaster triggered by the disruption of the "natural balance." Believing in the power of scientific knowledge and planning, he denounces those who are not ready to face the truth and resort to commonsense explanations and wishful thinking. Perhaps this was his most important motivation for writing the book, as the following extract taken from the introduction indicates:

Extract 45

"The Balkaners are a strange race. That what they see, they don't want to hear, that what they hear, they don't want to see"

A European researcher in the Balkans" (Chavkalovski 2001, p. 5).

The following extract taken from a newspaper article presents, perhaps, an example of the kind of reasoning Chavkalovski is aiming at:

Extract 46

'I believe only nature is capable of erring and correcting itself. The loss of Prespa Lake is not caused by the outflow to Lake Ohrid through the mysterious gaps under Galichica, nor because of irrigation. Its connection with Lake Ohrid is ancient and water for irrigation has been extracted for decades. The greatest loss, in fact, took place after the earthquake of the 1st of September in 1996, when great tectonic movements probably cut many groundwater streams and diverted them for the long-term. All the residents of Prespa see here the reasons for what happened to the lake. In addition, of course, for decades, year after year, we had droughts and here is the second real catastrophe. Well, possibly mother nature has now decided to correct all of that, but it would certainly need many years,' says Blazse Mishevski, resident of Asamati (Karevski 2006).

Importantly, the hydrological connection between Greater Prespa Lake and Lake Ohrid, through the "mysterious gaps under Galichica," is more than a challenge to those among the scientists, civil engineers, and local officials who are currently contemplating a technical solution to eventually close it and open it at will. This hydrological connection also channelizes and articulates the ideas contributing to the construction of Prespa, in particular its identity as a place of international importance, primarily derived from the "natural values" of Lake Prespa which equal or surpass those of Lake Ohrid. The line of logic runs through this connection so that the identity

of Prespa, that is, the Lake Prespa region, is constructed against or through that of the Lake Ohrid region, for, as Chavkalovski contends, the lake is the "most valuable treasure" of the Prespa basin (Chavkalovski 2001, p. 210). The following extracts taken from Chavkalovski's book on Prespa exemplify this ambivalent articulation of Prespa's identity through the natural values accorded to Lake Prespa compared to the natural values accorded to Lake Ohrid as an allegedly well-established reference:

Extract 47

The Prespa basin, (Greater and Lesser) Prespa Lake is the source of the Crni Drim River. The water runs out underground into the Ohrid basin, into Lake Ohrid and from there through the Crni Drim and Drim for 360 km, and enters the Adriatic Sea. It is a living natural organism. Whatever happenings take place in Prespa, wanted or not, are transmitted in a natural way to Lake Ohrid. We should not be sensitive only to the developments in Lake Ohrid and forget about Prespa. Learned people, global and domestic, argue that the bio-life in Lake Prespa is older than that in Lake Ohrid (Chavkalovski 2001, p. 8).

For Miroslav, on the contrary, the hydrological connection between the two watersheds provides a means to bring the Prespa and Ohrid basins together into a unity, identified as the Region of Ohrid and Prespa:

Extract 48

The people, the human race, we tend to interfere non-stop, arguably in the name of protection. However, the best protection would be to respect the natural watershed, at least this is what I think. Let the natural watershed feed in a natural way to avoid creating a mess, such as by

blocking the natural outflow from Prespa to Ohrid. We can do that, we are capable of doing it, to destroy, for instance, the springs at St. Naum or Tushemisht; these feed Lake Ohrid, probably. At least we are capable of doing that …. but we may create problems. Thus, let us not interfere there; let nature solve this problem on its own.

Referring to this hydrological and regional entity Miroslav opts for the well established term – "the Ohrid-Prespa Region." In Macedonia, this term is conventionally used in the professional literature such as geography, geology, the academic and popular history, but also in various public discourse and every-day life. It is not difficult to argue that it often denotes a hierarchical ordering of the two regions and this is seldom problematized or deconstructed. In arguing for his construction of the Region of Ohrid and Prespa as one whole, Miroslav concurs with this ordering both implicitly and explicitly. The latter is the case when he explains the higher endemism found in Lake Ohrid due to its ancient origin and depth, or the abundant cultural heritage of the city of Ohrid and its region compared to the relatively few archaeological sites and cultural monuments of Prespa identified thus far.

The passages above indicate the relevance of the hydrology of the basin for the construction of Prespa's identity. This analysis also complements the findings in the previous section that Lake Prespa, its aesthetic qualities in particular, plays a significant, if not central, role in the construction of Prespa's identity as a tourist destination. On close examination, Prespiots engage the lake in the construction of Prespa's identity in many other ways. For instance, in his book on Prespa, Kiril identifies the following phenomena related to the lake as unique: the freezing of its entire surface, clean water that has never been polluted, the invisible (underground)

outflow, the moderating effects on the climate in the basin, and the periodic and considerable fluctuations of the water level.

The most convincing case for a profound interconnection of the biophysical and social environment in the construction of place comes, however, from the Greek part of Prespa, the sub-basin of Lake Micro Prespa. The lake ecosystem and its unique features, including the water level fluctuation, are also central to this case. Nature conservationists have been the main proponents of the relatively new construct of Greek Prespa as a "place for man and nature," as the following extract from Dimitrios' talk illustrates:

Extract 49

The researcher: How would you define the character (of Prespa), how would you describe it?

Dimitrios: I would say that, I will use something which has been a logo of SPP for many years – because I really respect it and I agree with it – it said: Prespa is a typical, a very characteristic place, it's a place for man and nature. Men have always lived there. They have shaped the environment to a great extent, but with many, many, many positive examples. For example, wet meadows were there because fishermen used to cut the vegetation in the shallow water, or stock breeders would cut and collect the vegetation to feed their stock in the winter, or there was a lot of grazing. So a lot of grazing in the wetland contributed to having to maintain wet meadows. In those times, until 1985, this was traditional management and nobody called it management – it was traditional practice. Then it was abandoned because people switched to

bean monoculture. And we came 15 years later to say that we should bring back some management practices like those, like water buffalo grazing, cattle grazing, and summer cutting to restore wet meadows. So, if you want to have wet meadows you want to have human activities there. There are, of course, many, many other examples. … So it's really that the character of Prespa is really that. It's not only nature, it's not only man. It's man and nature. And I think this is more or less the case on all three sides of Prespa.

The beginning of the discourse of (Greek) Prespa as a "place of man and nature" can be traced back to the late 1960s, when French ornithologists "discovered its unparalleled beauty and biodiversity as well as an ornithological paradise" (Catsadorakis 1999, p. 47). This discovery was soon publicized among the officials at the national and international levels and even more among conservationists in Greece and beyond. As a result, the Greek government first declared the region a nature reserve, aiming at the conservation of the waterfowl, and later, in 1974, a "Ramsar" site and a "National Forest" were established, encompassing the whole of Greek Prespa (Catsadorakis 1999, p. 78). In the years that followed many scientists became interested in the ecology and culture of Greek Prespa, contributing to its image as an area of European, if not global, importance.

As a result, efforts to protect the environment and nature in the region increased steadily, although with varying success. The interventions undertaken in the period between 1984 and 1986, supported by the EU Integrated Mediterranean Program (IMP) marked a major setback to conservationists' efforts. IMPs supported pilot development schemes aiming at providing an impetus to the less developed regions of Europe through integrated operational programs spanning several years. In

the words of the distinguished Greek conservationist, Georgios Catsadorakis, "the choice of development options was unfortunate and the work itself badly planned" and "the natural environment of Prespa suffered another blow." As Thymios Papayannis recalls his first trip to Prespa with the task of investigating, on behalf of the European Commission, the negative consequences to the environment inflicted by the development interventions, "in the midst of this destruction, furious but determined, stood Georgios Catsadorakis, who had decided to link his personal and professional life with Prespa" (Papayannis 1999, p. vii).

Indeed, Catsadorakis, Papayannis, and other conservationists from Greece and their allies from the international community launched a campaign to counter the intensive development promoted in a top-down manner by the Greek and EU bureaucracies by offering an alternative model, "tailored to the particular region of Prespa," which provides for "a more uniform and integrated way of managing space and human activities for the benefit of both contemporary and future generations" (Papayannis 1999, p. viii). One of the most important actions in this campaign was the meeting "A Future for Prespa" organized by WWF Greece. By that time the biologist Catsadorakis had settled permanently in the area and played a critical role in the creation of a local organization called the "Prespa Centre for Man and Nature," which functioned as an information medium until 1991, when the Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) was established.

The establishment of the SPP was the major turning point in the efforts of conservationists. The SPP was founded following an initiative of World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Friends of Prespa association. In addition to these organizations, a number of non-profit civil associations also contributed to the

establishment of the SPP: the Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Environment and the Cultural Heritage – "Elliniki Eteria," the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature, the Hellenic Ornithological Society, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK), Foundation Tour du Valat (France), The Greek Biotope/Wetland Centre, the Danish Ornithological Society (Denmark), and ARCTUROS (Greece). In recognition of the continuous contribution of the SPP to the conservation of nature in the region, in 1999 the SPP was awarded the Wetland Conservation Award by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (sharing the award in the NGO category with the Lake Naivasha Riparian Association, Kenya).

The mission of the SPP is "to maintain and strengthen the relationship between people and nature and to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of Prespa for the benefit of its inhabitants and of all those interested and concerned, today and in the future" (SPP 2007). Those behind the SPP believe that while the IMPs pilot development project demonstrated how the "old-fashioned model of intensive development" may be deleterious to the environment, the "classical system of protected sites" is also inappropriate (Papayannis 1999, p. viii). The latter is deemed inflexible, favoring environmental protection or nature conservation, regardless of the costs, and even at the cost of "reduction or even complete removal of human activity" (Papayannis 1999, p. viii). What is needed instead is the understanding that the distinctiveness of the Greek Prespa is a result not only of the "area's natural assets," but also because they are "inextricably bound up with the presence of man and his cultural and practical activities." In the words of Catsadorakis, in Greek Prespa, "the influences of men and nature are so intimately interwoven as to be almost inseparable" (Catsadorakis 1999, p. xviii).

Intimately interwoven with the area are also the lives of the leading activists of the SPP, which is exclusively active in the Prespa region. Coming to the area from the outside, usually urban centers in Greece, first as field researchers, they tend to settle in the Greek Prespa region, becoming one of the locals. Through their devotion to their professional careers, with the concomitant intensive field work, by establishing a family life, and through repeated interactions with the local communities these people gradually develop a sense of belonging and also a sense of acceptance by the others.

Extract 50

The Researcher: Living there, seeing the life around you, what would you pick out as the most significant change, development, different from what you knew or what you saw in Prespa when you arrived and today?

Dimitrios: Yes, OK. Not an easy question. Look, one thing definitely it's related to my work, and it's inevitable, if you want. The SPP was established in 1991. Until 1997-1998 things were still a bit difficult with the local people. They were hostile to a certain extent. It was difficult to accept the fact that a conservation management NGO was growing, doing things. But I think that after 1997 things started progressing very much. I mean, we got closer to the local people. Specific facts, of course, help me with that. For example, the fact that local people work in the SPP, some of them. The fact that I was married or I got married in 1998, to a local woman … And also the fact that we have families now and we are established there. Because very often what the Prespa people were seeing from scientists and conservationists was that the latter were coming from the city to do their study over there and then they would

simply go back to the cities or to their universities or to their seat any way. They were not really staying there. The fact that living there with them, first of all makes you understand better how the whole area works, and they accept you better. So I think this is one of the big changes. The connection with the local people, on a personal basis, but also on, let's say, on the level of organizations. For example, the municipality of Prespa and the SPP as an organization, and not as simply a sum of individuals. This has improved very much. There are contradictions, there are fights, very often, but at least we do sit around the same table and discuss. I think this is one of the most important things.

Dimitrios joined the team of SPP at a critical moment. It was in the beginning of the preparations for the LIFE-Nature project on the management of the wet meadows around Lesser Prespa Lake, the first to be implemented by the SPP. This was a lucky moment, notes Dimitrios, for he was given the opportunity to get his first job by "using his diploma" and conduct PhD research, something which was, he adds, always in his mind. The successful implementation of this project paved the road for the next LIFE-Nature project "Conservation of Priority Bird Species in Lake Mikri Prespa" which aimed at up-scaling up the pilot actions from the previous LIFE project to the entire area of the Lesser Prespa Lake basin. Project actions included research and systematic monitoring, investment in infrastructure and human resources, public awareness and information, and the involvement of stakeholders from different sectors as well as authorities at the local, national and international levels.

The success of the project in terms of best practice and demonstrations of nature conservation made a significant contribution to the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives and was recognized by the EU. The EU Member States

represented on the LIFE Committee, together with the LIFE Unit, identified the 26 Best LIFE-Nature projects completed during 2007 and 2008 and, among these, five were selected as "Best of the Best." The project implemented by the SPP was among the five best projects. For Dimitrios, who played a significant role in the success of this project, this award is a source of great satisfaction and something he is proud of.

The main project actions included: the reconstruction of a sluice at the channel draining water from Lesser Prespa Lake into Greater Prespa Lake aiming to improve water-level management in the former; the restoration of the wet meadows in Lesser Prespa Lake, covering some 70 ha; and the monitoring of the avifauna and the vegetation of the managed littoral sites (EC 2009, p. 20). The reconstruction of the old sluice was central to the overall success of the project in many different ways. In a publication dedicated to the best LIFE-Nature projects for the period 2002-2007, the European Commission, Environment Directorate-General writes (EC 2009, p. 20):

Extract 51

Prior to the LIFE project, water management between Lake Mikri Prespa [Lesser Prespa Lake] and the larger Lake Megali Prespa [Greater Prespa Lake] was performed through a simple iron sluice gate at Koula. The sluice simply drained the overflow water from Mikri [Lesser] into Megali [Greater] in order to avoid flooding of the littoral agricultural areas and retain water for irrigation. However, this mechanism didn't take into account the demands of ecological protection, as well as the real needs of the farmers' fields. Following a series of local stakeholder consultations and hydrological, environmental and technical studies, a new, modern sluice was built and began operating in spring 2005.

The new "modern" sluice, therefore, has become a landmark in the emerging landscape of "man and nature." Not only was it able to take into account the needs of farmers, but it also listened to the voices of the numerous bird species and the entire lake ecosystem, represented by the local conservationists with the help of many others involved in the design of the Habitats Directive, EU and global policies for biodiversity conservation. The sluice made it possible to strike a deal to the benefit of many at all levels, local, national, EU and beyond. The sluice has become a powerful element in the landscape, reification of the "man and nature" concept.

Indeed, scientists argue, this man-made structure in the landscape, both in its old and new guises, perhaps saved Prespa from turning into something very different. A report following the study of the hydrology of the Prespa basin notes that in April 2004 the water level of the Lesser Prespa Lake was approx. 6.5 meters above that of Greater Prespa Lake and that "under these conditions the Micro Prespa practically would have dried out if there were not the regulating structure to control the connection between the two Lakes" (GFA 2005). The sluice may easily have prevented the dreams or indeed the intentions of others for constructing quite a different identity for Prespa, as the following extract strongly suggests:

Extract 52

Mikri Prespa Lake has extensive reed-beds where mosquitoes, the major source of malaria breed ….. The evil of malaria will be eradicated completely when the lake has been drained, but we do not know if this can be achieved because there are numerous difficulties involved in disposing of the water. If the lake were drained it would provide 6000 hectares of extremely fertile soil. If only we could achieve this! What an

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achievement it would be. Prespa would be freed from malaria and agriculture would be given an enormous boost, greatly increasing the wealth of the region (Vafeiadhis 1940, quoted in Catsadorakis 1999, p. 161).

The vision for developing the Greek part of Prespa through the modernization of agriculture started to turn into reality in the 1960s with the construction of an irrigation system. As Catsadorakis puts it, at that time "development meant irrigated cultivation, which meant water, which meant the lake" (1999, p. 45). For Catsadorakis this was a major turning point in the history of this region, which had remained "unchanged for one or two hundred years" (1999, p. 39), a time when "people were not aware of the boundary between the realm of nature and the realm of man, between the natural and the artificial" (1999, p. 42).

It was as part of the new scheme for irrigation that, among the other interventions, a sluice was built at the northern end of the channel through which the water flows from Lesser into Greater Prespa Lake. With the construction of the irrigation system and the sluice "a new era had dawned" (Catsadorakis 1999, 44). The new era brought significant changes in land use with the consequence that "the rich biodiversity of Prespa has been impoverished all round" (Catsadorakis 1999, p. 50).

But, there is an element of irony in the fact that the sluice built by those envisioning the Greek part of Prespa as a developed agricultural region, without taking into account the cost of deterioration of the environment and loss of biodiversity, some 35 years later emerged as the epitome of the new landscape of "man and nature." It may be the case that this relatively simple structure has helped Lesser Prespa Lake to part from Greater Prespa Lake on its way downward, currently

some 6 meters below Lesser Prespa Lake. As for the decline of the water level in Greater Prespa Lake, it has been concluded recently that "whilst it is believed that most of the water level change is natural there are clearly steps that can be taken to reduce consumptive use of water by agriculture" (IWLEARN 2011, p. 8). In other words, the sluice may have precluded the imaginary of Prespa cherished by Vafeiadhis and the like from turning into reality. Its metaphorical meaning in the construction of the image of Greek part of Prespa as a "place of man and nature" is rather convincing. One may still argue that "the boundary between the realm of nature and the realm of man" continues to be ambiguous.

The "place of man and nature" is where real life takes place. There are those who have devoted their professional and family lives to maintaining this place according to this image, becoming deeply rooted in it, and engendering it through their personal identities. The SPP certainly plays a pivotal role in the area becoming a "place for man and nature." It was done through conducting or supporting scientific research, and also implementing and supporting actions that shaped the landscape according to an image of "the old days," as Catsadorakis puts it (1999). With help from scientists and conservationists from Greece and abroad and also different institutions and organizations, both Greek and EU, they are committed to restoring some of the practices which shaped the landscape in the "old days". Now it is mainly the responsibility of the SPP to organize and support financially the regular cutting of reeds, and maintain the wet meadows through keeping a herd of water bison owned by this organization. It is because of SPP's networking with scientists, conservationists, and officials in Greece and beyond that those actions are possible financially. Their genuine commitment to the idea of Prespa as a "place for man and nature" motivates

their strong involvement and support in the establishment of Transboundary Prespa Park. For, as Dimitrios explains in his talk, Prespa is "one thing:"

Extract 53

When people say I am from Prespa I think that, overall, they mean the basin of Prespa. That's why perhaps the idea of the Transboundary Prespa Park is really fixed to all the local people. There may be exceptions, but I haven't met any. So I haven't met anyone from Resen, for example, or from the Albanian part or from the Greek part saying that I am from Prespa and that this person meaning he is from only the Macedonian part or only the Albanian part or only the Greek part. No, I think they all mean the whole basin. I've met hundreds of people saying Prespa and meaning whatever is around the two lakes.

What this extract suggests is that the conceptualization of Prespa as a "place for man and nature" is predicated on, though not limited to, an understanding of the close connections between the ecosystem and society in the basin. It has a strong foundation in the natural sciences, but is also sensitive to history and the specific character and working of human societies. Being rooted in the natural sciences and operating through such concepts as integrated ecosystem or basin management is not, however, the sufficient condition for constructing Prespa as a unity and providing for a shared regional identity. Conservationists from across the border may share the ecological concepts, but they can still disagree about the identity of Prespa, as the following extract from Vladimir's talk strongly suggests:

Extract 54

The researcher: I suppose you have had opportunities to see the whole of Prespa. Is it so?

Vladimir: Well, pretty much.

The researcher: What were your impressions, or how did you experience it outside the Macedonian state border, when you were in Prespa?

Vladimir: Outside? How do you mean?

The researcher: When you are on your own. What are your impressions? Can you tell me more about how you experienced it the first time, or now that you go back…I guess you visit both parts?

Vladimir: I see, I see – you mean in the other parts of Prespa.

The researcher: Yes

Vladimir: How do I experience them? Well, that is very interesting. I have had many emotional, let us say, moments. First of all, the nature. Some things I liked even more than here. I don't know, maybe because it was new to me. For instance, on the Greek side more, but also on the Albanian side. True, on the Albanian side it is partly destroyed. However, what has remained is more of untouched nature. You have more of that raw beauty, not overly cultivated. I liked it in a way, a lot. The cognition about the existence of communities there with which we are ethnically and organically connected, but there are some barriers between us. I have been hearing about, but recently, my last visit to Greece was a shocking experience. So, we live together with our

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neighbors, there are some relations, we visit their country. And, you go to a region in which the people literally talk in Macedonian, if you turn to them in Macedonian. And, it is an interesting moment when you talk to them in private, you feel they have the need to relieve themselves, to say something, they feel you are close. They have the need to develop a relationship with what is the nucleus, let us say, from which they have been cut off. However, it lasts only until the moment when somebody else comes in. Then they do not know Macedonian or do not talk about what happened, all that they have suffered through history.

The above extract from Vladimir's talk suggests that ethnic identity may override other constructs of personal and collective identities in the Prespa basin. Although the construction of the identity of Prespa as an ethnic place was discussed in much detail in the previous section, for the analysis at hand it is useful to emphasize that it is not indubitable. Strong support for this comes from the talk of Vanngel, who spent most of his life in the Albanian part of Prespa. When asked what makes him proud of his place, being Macedonian is the first thing he mentions. This sense of pride is derived mainly through a comparison with the ethnic Albanians in Albania; values such as peacefulness, hospitality, and nonviolence, in Vanngel's view, make the Macedonians in Albania culturally superior to the ethnic Albanians.

For Vanngel the ethnic connection with the Macedonians in Macedonian Prespa is all too obvious: "it is obvious, the same people, same customs, same horah, everything is the same, except for being backward – that is what a regime can achieve." In other words, according to Vanngel, the differences between the Macedonians in the Albanian and the Macedonian parts of the Prespa basin are due to the 'backwardness' of the Albanian model of socialism. Although, he explains, the

difference in the level of development has been significantly reduced since the fall of communism in Albania, the perception of the Macedonians from Mala Prespa as poor and backward still prevails among the Macedonians in the Macedonian part of Prespa. This identity imposed on Mala Prespa has important consequences for Vanngel.

Although Vanngel has lived in the Macedonian part of Prespa for more than 13 years now, Mala Prespa in Albania and his village of origin are the places where he feels at home and hopes to return one day, perhaps after retiring. When asked to explain this strong attachment, despite the fact that he established his own family in Macedonia, he mentions memories of a happy childhood, but also the sense of community, the closeness with the people in his village and in Mala Prespa in general. This is what he misses in his current place of residence, in a small town in the Macedonian part of Prespa. More importantly, there is also a sense of inequality, being treated as a citizen of a lower category. He often finds it offensive when Macedonians from the Macedonian part of Prespa refer to the people of Mala Prespa as Albanians. Moreover, he stresses, the Albanians in Albania always refer to them as Macedonians. In practice, according to Vanngel, this is reflected in the fact that the Macedonians from Mala Prespa living in the Macedonian part are never employed in public institutions in the municipality of Resen, regardless of their education and competence.

This discussion points to the significance of power relations in constructing and deconstructing identity at both the personal and collective levels. Indeed, this can be observed in all three constructs of Prespa's identity discussed in this chapter: Prespa as an ethnic place, as a tourist center, and a place of man and nature. In the latter, for instance, there is an attempt to strike a balance between the interests of

various stakeholders, including biodiversity, to the exclusion of significant issues related to ethnic identity. This deficiency surfaces when the construction of Prespa as a place of man and nature is scaled up from the Greek part of Prespa to the whole Prespa basin. The following extract taken from Vladimir's interview is a good case illustration:

> ***Extract 55***
>
> Through the project we promote integrated management of the system. Then the communities are going to contribute in some way, all of them. Our contact persons in the project are people from Athens and Thessalonica so that we do not come into contact with the Macedonian population there. We made several initiatives to bring agricultural associations from there, our people, so to speak. No, the conditions are not mature. We know the importance of bringing the producers of beans to sit together with our producers of apples, to have a chat about water, irrigation or similar things, what needs to be done. It is interesting. I think it is politics. That was something that made me wonder. How could it be, at the same time so close and so unknown? And it is the same ethnic group, the same people.

The current success of the water level regime established in the Greek part of the Lesser Prespa Lake basin through the sluice would be seriously threatened if the Albanian government decided to reactivate the water pumping scheme to draw water from the lake and feed the irrigation system in the neighboring Korcha basin in Albania. Nevertheless, conservationists believe this is unrealistic. For Prespiots in Macedonia it is difficult to imagine, at least for the time being, that such a sluice or its

equivalent could be installed at the main underwater siphon draining Greater Prespa Lake into Lake Ohrid, which needs consent from all three countries. Other aspects aside, the biodiversity has not yet been made a strong issue by the proponents of this idea.

5.6. Conclusions: A grounded theory of the mutual constitution of the self and place across geographical scales

The discussion in this chapter adds evidence supporting the theoretical propositions introduced in the previous chapter as to the mutual constitution of the self and place across geographical scales. Following Sack's relational framework (see figures 2, 3 and 4 in Chapter 4), the mutual constitution of the self and place proceeds in the same way at all scales, combining nature, social relations and meaning, although it combines "different types of elements" (1997, p. 121). But, it is also true that we need different approaches to investigate and describe this process as it unfolds on different spatio-temporal scales (Sack 1997).

The examples presented in this chapter demonstrate that the different constructs of Prespa's identity imply a view from a particular perspective. This chapter discussed three such perspectives or representations of the Prespa basin: nationalism, environmentalism, and instrumentalism. In these representations the identity of Prespa is an expression of the region's internal, given, and enduring features. In some instances, the elements of the biophysical environment are causally linked to the character and identity of the community within the basin. In other constructions the influences of nature and culture are intermingled and Prespa is perceived as a product of its physical and historical geography. The meanings assigned to Prespa in these constructs are, however, always articulated through

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comparison with other places and in an interaction with environmental, social, cultural, political, and historical influences that originate outside the physical boundaries of the basin. For instance, in the construction of Prespa as an internationally recognized tourist destination, the unique and objective physical geography of the basin and historically sedimented social relations and culture are matched to faraway, but equally appealing, places. In other instances, the sustainable practices in Prespa, re-constructed after the image of traditional rural life, are critically dependent on discourses and processes operating extralocally.

The three major constructions of Prespa's identity presented in this chapter represent three different ways of seeing Prespa as a landscape. The landscape of Prespa in these representations is a synthesis of elements in the biophysical environment, both natural and man-made, which together contribute to the distinct "personality" of the region. Following Sack's (1997) relational framework, the three representations are particular perspectives taken from points along the epistemological axis, between a view from "virtually nowhere" (an objective view) and a view from "somewhere" (a personal and idiosyncratic view). But, as Sack strongly argues, we not need only many such perspectives to view a place from, but also to move down the epistemological axis, close to day-to-day experiences to fully illuminate the reality of place as a causal agent in the formation of the self (p. 182). However, unlike an objective analysis, day-to-day experiences cannot be easily translated into discrete models and scientifically testable theories because "there are simply too many nuances, connotations, and the like to fit the rigid structure of spatial-analytic language" (Sack 1997, p. 181). Instead, human purposes and intentions can be modeled by ordinary, natural language:

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Using natural language to describe the nuances of rules and meanings means that they are not going to be expressed as parts of laws, generalizations, or models, but rather in descriptions and narratives. These are like the ones we use in ordinary life to explain our own behavior. They are also like the forms of explanation used by historians, regional geographers, and other social scientists who must explain complex and subtle material about human beings. Such descriptions and explanations tie facts together, pointing to how this particular fact has given rise to, influenced, affected, or caused that particular one (Sack 1997, p. 181).

The different ways of knowing place and places of different scales are represented in a modification of Sack's relational framework shown in Figure 7 below.

In keeping with this line of argument, the interview protocol used in the first stage of this study was used to provoke narration and discourage non-narrative responses, such as ahistorical descriptions, or generalizations in the form of a layman's theory or discourse about topics which were more or less relevant for the recollected experience. During the second stage of the research, however, the participants were regularly asked to take a view on Prespa from a distance and elaborate on their representations of the region.
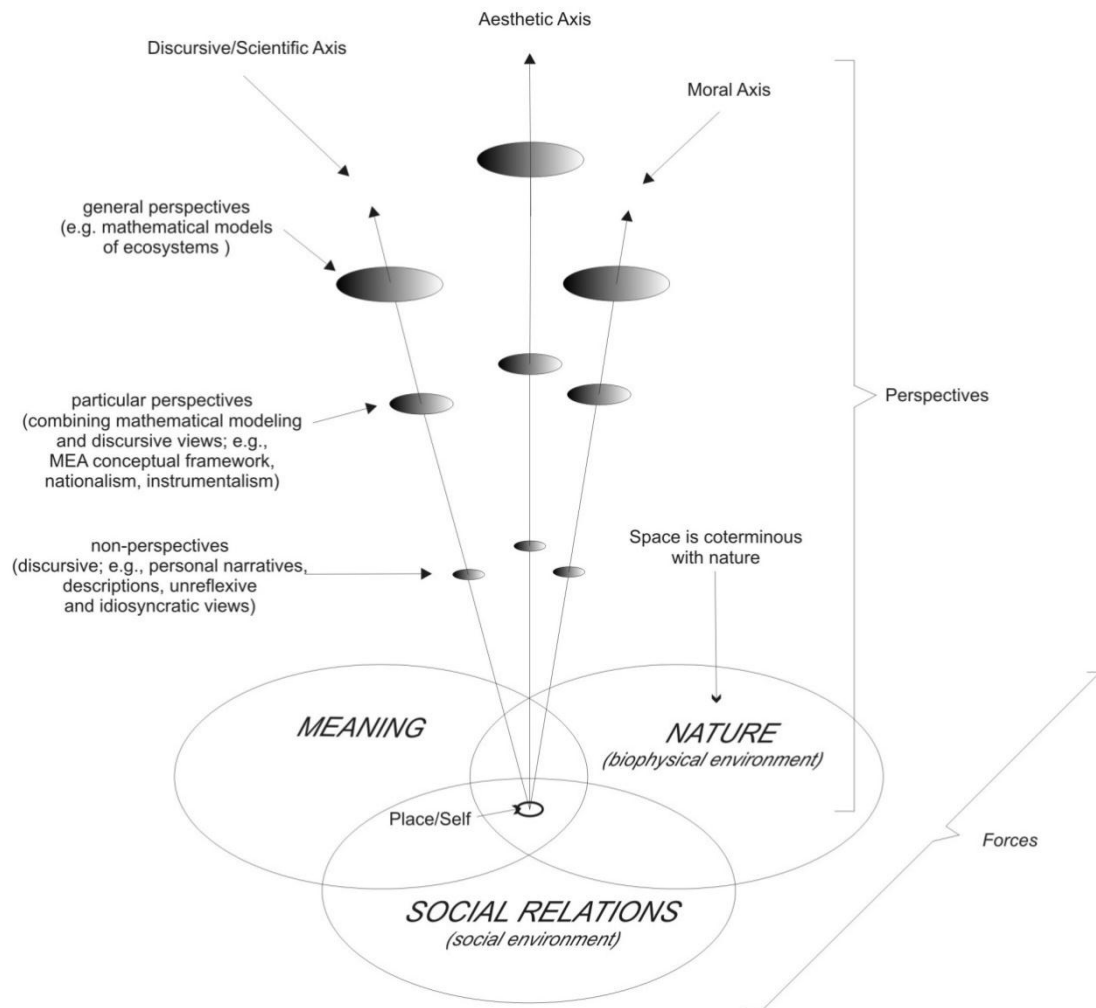
Figure 7. Different approaches to knowing/describing place following Sack's

relational framework (adapted from Sack 1997, p. 28)

Although the biophysical environment is a central concept in this study, this

and related terms such as nature, environment, ecosystem, basin, society, and

community, are often too abstract to have any meaning in the daily lives of most of

the participants in this study. For this reason, the researcher was careful not to offer

clues or guide the participants during the interviews by employing or referring to such

concepts. For the purposes of the discussion presented here, however, the term

biophysical environment denotes the material world. In this broad conceptualization

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the biophysical environment consists of animate and inanimate entities and phenomena; it also includes the built physical environment and cultural artifacts. The biophysical environment in this conceptualization would include such entities and phenomena as climate, gravity, hydrological cycles, and sandy beaches, but also the materiality of the home, apple orchards, and corn fields, mechanical tools, and all cultural artifacts. In keeping with this view of the world the individual human body is also a biophysical entity.

This conceptualization, it must be noted, reproduces and maintains the much criticized dichotomy between subject and object, nature and society, man and nature, and other similar dichotomies (Ingold 2000, Meyer 2001, Latour 2004). Yet just such a view of the world is implied by the theoretical propositions guiding this research. Therefore, for the purposes of this research I could do little more than soften the conventional dichotomy between nature and society or between the biophysical and social environment. Following Bruno Latour's (2004) lead, instead of cutting the "Gordian knot," my approach in this research was to "untie a few of its strands in order to knot them back together differently" (p. 3).

Chapter 4 demonstrated how the meanings and the knowledge of the biophysical environment of a place are born of everyday involvement in the place. Arguably, this is most intensive in the home, where the biophysical environment enters everyday activities through the material conditions of home life. In the predominantly rural settlements of Prespa this observation can easily apply to the households' property and the village. Beyond the home, however, the personal experience of the biophysical environment becomes increasingly patchy, of differing intensities, and changes over the course of life. This is because the geographic area supporting the construction of place meanings varies in extent and largely depends on

the type of activities the individual is involved in particular locales. Such locales can include street corners or village squares, various public buildings (including schools, churches, and community halls) were villagers meet to chat, but also a stretch of the lakeshore where fishermen pull up their boats, orchards, cultivated fields, and meadows where villagers help each other or tend cattle, large tracts of forest land where they hunt together or collect mushrooms and firewood. For the participants living in Resen, the only urban settlement in the basin, this ensemble of locales is somewhat different and can include popular beaches on the shore of Lake Prespa and the villages of grandparents where they spent many summer days as children.

Following participants' recollections of personal experience, place is best understood as congeries, a matrix of locales or settings for routine everyday social interactions. In such places there is an opportunity for the individual to experience and make meanings of the biophysical environment in unmediated and unexpected ways. Any of these locales can be significant in participants' construction of self-identity and the concomitant place-identity. In any such locales the biophysical environment can contribute to the sense of who they are, even though they may not make specific reference to its biophysical features and qualities. To some participants the experience of the biophysical environment in such locales has had significant influence on the meaning of place and their sense of self.

Place is, therefore, an outcome of an individual's cumulative interaction with the biophysical and social environment within a geographic area. The meanings of place are contingent upon the bodily experience it affords when one spends time there. Variability in meanings among individuals or groups arises from uneven experiences with different locales. The geographic area which supports similar

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interactions for a person of the biophysical and social environments is likely to, but not necessarily, support both a sense of place and a sense of community.

What distinguishes the places of smaller geographical extent, such as the home and village, from those of large scale, such as the region, is the intensity and immediacy of engagement with the social and biophysical environment. The *immediacy and intensity of the bodily experience* in a place becomes thinner and increasingly fragmented over larger geographic areas. This chapter presented examples showing that experience of the Prespa basin, for instance, is more likely to be mediated by pre-existing constructs of place rather than direct, corporeal experience. This evidence is in line with Tuan's (1977) observation that the constructions of places at higher levels rely increasingly on indirect, intellectual experience. These places, argued Tuan (1977), are conceptual in character rather than perceptual and tend to have weaker meaning.

The sheer size of the Prespa region, other reasons aside, prevents Prespiots from having direct, immediate experience of it as a whole. There is, however, an important exception in the case of Prespa. Prespa has strong perceptual prominence – visibility. It has distinctive, physically defined boundaries that can be seen from viewpoints in the mountains around the basin. Because of its visual prominence Prespa has "personality" (Tuan 1974, p. 446). Powerful manifestations of nature, argues Tuan, command personality (1974, p. 446):

When the geographer talks of the personality of a region, he may have both aspects in mind. The region can be both cozy and sublime: it is deeply humanized and yet the physical fundament is fundamentally indifferent to human purpose.

The gaze over the Prespa basin, predicated on perceptual sensation, commands aesthetic response. This particular way of seeing Prespa – a view from afar (a viewpoint) – and its aestheticization tends to transform Prespa from a geographical space (a basin) into a "landscape." In constructing Prespa's landscape, Prespiots tend to focus on its constituting elements; the lakes, mountains, islands, villages, and churches are made objects. This objective presentation of the basin implies a view from a particular perspective: nationalism (an ethnic place), environmentalism (a place of man and nature) or instrumentalism (a tourist place). With this, Prespa is no longer experienced perceptually, but rather conceptually (Tuan 1977). These presentations of Prespa emphasize some and exclude other characteristics of the region. They can be seen as political because they favor a particular vision, goal or cause. They can also be seen as political because the landscape way of seeing Prespa, to paraphrase Walker and Fortmann (2003), points to the beholder of the gaze, which in turn answers the question of who "owns" the landscape or decides how it should look.

In the landscape way of perceiving/seeing Prespa, the features of the biophysical environment provide a reflection against which identity can be mapped and experienced both at individual and collective levels. The biophysical environment in the landscape way of seeing Prespa serves its presentation well as something given, stable and durable. But in the case of Prespa this is regularly extended beyond its conceptualization as a physical world. For Prespiots the region is, above all, a place imbued with personal meanings. Golem Grad Island in Greater Prespa Lake, for instance, is not only a physical feature, nor simply a location of a church or an archeological site. It is all of these and much more when it becomes part of self-identity. It is for these reasons that the biophysical environment of Prespa contributes

to its differentiation from other places, which in turn reinforces its constitution as an object of identity. Going over the larger body of empirical data, there are examples, although somewhat limited, demonstrating that these conclusions can be also valid for places of smaller geographical scale, such as the basin of Lesser Prespa Lake and individual villages.

This research has demonstrated that Prespiots have different interests in Prespa and proclaim different identities for it. Differing abilities to see and impart values and meanings to the landscape are embedded in sets of power relations – struggles. In other words, the differing identities of Prespa are encapsulated in power relations and are likely to be contested. Ideas about Prespa and its significance are involved in ideological and emotional struggles. Constructing the identity of the Prespa region is, therefore, ultimately political. Such issues as nationalism, territoriality, and place-making through inclusion and exclusion manifest themselves in the politics of the construction of Prespa's identity. The biophysical environment, including natural features and phenomena, may relate to any of these issues.

In conclusion, this research has demonstrated that the concept of place brings into focus the entire range of experiences through which people get to know and make meaning of the biophysical and social environment. These settings or places certainly include the home, the village (neighborhood), and many other mundane and sacred places. Involvement with the biophysical environment in everyday routine activities in various settings and places creates a web of meanings that maintain and define the self-identity of a person. This work has illustrated how self-identity and the related relationships with places can be irrevocably altered through novel, sometimes traumatic, experiences with the biophysical environment. Examples presented here

describe in detail the active process by which people engage in (re)establishing relationships to the biophysical environment of places and how this is closely interwoven with the reconstruction of self-identity. This research also demonstrates that a person's relationships to places are products of a larger socio-political context. In describing the seemingly objective biophysical attributes of the landscape Prespiots are, however, engaging in fundamental processes of assigning significant social and cultural meanings to that place.

The aim of this study was to improve our understanding of the ways the biophysical environment relates to the construction of place-based identities across scales. The research strategy of this study combines ethnography with grounded theory with the aim of creating an astute analysis by interpreting the meanings in the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, and eventually by proposing a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions, and consequences of the major social-psychological processes emerging from the data. Indeed, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) advise, building theory need not be the only goal for doing research and knowledge can be also generated through "high-level descriptions" and "conceptual ordering" (p. x). Also, they add, it is entirely possible to complete a theory-generating study without producing significant results. However, as they argue, significance is part of the usual canons of good science, both qualitative and quantitative (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 266). Research is considered significant when it delivers new information or produces guidelines for action (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 272).

This research is significant in that it tests some of the concepts and propositions of the more abstract and widely influential (meta-)theory of Robert D. Sack – the relational framework (1997). But this was an unintended, although

positive, outcome of this study. Indeed, a researcher doing grounded theory investigation is advised to take no account of previous theories directly relevant for the field under study and avoid as much as possible theoretical preconceptions (Day 1991, p. 242). On the other hand, the chances of an emerging theory being accepted increase if it is consistent with other theories (Day 1991, p. 242).

This study succeeded in developing a preliminary *grounded theory of the mutual constitution of the self and place across scales* that describes some of the socio-psychological processes by which people and places are related. The central category in this theoretical framework – *the co-constitution of self and place* – is related to the basic feature of a person-place relationship – the continued negotiation and mutual constitution and/or reconstitution of the self and place. The other two processes which emerged from this research, *mapping the self through the family*, and *matching the self and place*, capture two specific ways the person-place relationship is experienced or constructed in participants' narratives. The analysis of the empirical evidence collected during the second stage provided no new significant information concerning the preliminary categories. The researcher cannot claim, however, that these theoretical categories can be considered *saturated*, that is, that "no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p. 136). Indeed, this was a difficult task bearing in mind that most of the theoretical categories that emerged initially represent major and very complex social or psychological phenomena, such as the concepts of the "quality of life" or "life-course." This was also an unintended outcome of the decision made at the very beginning of the study to use open-ended, unstructured interview protocols designed to elicit and provoke narration of personal experience of place. For similar reasons, the important observation from the second stage of the study concerning the

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role of the (*immediacy and intensity) of the bodily experience* in the mutual constitution of the self and place at different geographical scales, from local to global, could not be developed conceptually to the point of saturation. The development of the properties and dimensions of this category would take more in-depth field work over the course of one or even several years – a task for a future study.

The previous chapter argued that the preliminary *grounded theory of the mutual constitution of the self and place across scales* is consistent with other theoretical frameworks and propositions developed in the field of human geography, environmental sociology, and environmental psychology in particular. Among these, however, Sack's (1997) relational framework (a meta-theory) and his graphic presentation of the continuous connection between place and self are particularly relevant. The three major processes which emerged from the empirical data of this research can be neatly integrated and represented in Sack's graphic presentations, as shown in figures 2, 3, 4 and 7. This integration provides strong grounds for claiming validity for the theory generated through this research. Furthermore, that part of the knowledge generated in this study which was not tapped by the preliminary grounded theory is still available to the readers in the form of rather thick descriptions and explanations which locate place meanings in participants' perspectives. This detailed information and Sack's wide-ranging theory allow for the development of a set of policy recommendations concerning the management of the Prespa basin which are presented in the concluding chapter.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was informed by a stream of scholarly work that I have termed "ecosystem-as-place research." It seeks to integrate the concept of place into the theory and practice of ecosystem management (Williams and Patterson 1996, Williams and Stewart 1998, Cantrill 1998, Eisenhauer *et al.* 2000, Cantrill and Senecah 2001, Cheng and Daniels 2003, Cheng *et al.* 2003, Stedman 2003a, Stedman 2003b, Clark and Stein 2003, Cheng and Daniels 2005). The theoretical framework for this research draws on concepts of place, and the related concepts of sense of place, place attachment, and place identity, in environmental sociology, human geography, environmental psychology, anthropology, spatial planning, philosophy, and systems ecology. These concepts share the idea that places are not given and fixed but constructed in the context of human action that integrates location and meaning. The theoretical framework for this research consists of six propositions which synthesize key ideas on the concept of place in these disciplines and indicate how these concepts can be useful for a systematic examination of the connection between humans and ecosystems.

The research strategy combines ethnography with grounded theory in an iterative mode of data gathering and analysis. For the purposes of the research I used the Prespa region, shared among Macedonia, Albania and Greece, as a case study with three cases. To collect empirical data I combined ethnographic unstructured in-depth interviews with participant observation and critical reading of popular books on Prespa written by Prespiots, as well as documents and newspaper reports on various events and issues concerning Prespa.

Ethnographic interviewing was the most important source of data in this study. I conducted 20 interviews in total in two overlapping stages. In the first stage a stratified sample of 15 participants was interviewed to collect personal stories of participants' everyday life in their particular places; in the second, I conducted 5 additional interviews to collect stories of personal experience in the Prespa region, but also to explore specific questions arising from preliminary analysis of the data collected in the previous stage. The participants were interviewed with the following assumptions in mind: (1) there is conjunction between self-identity and place; (2) the conjunction is salient at various spatial scales; and (3) the participants can convey their sense of self and meanings of place through narratives of personal, direct experience in their places.

In this chapter I summarize the major findings from this work as it pertains to the central research question: How does the biophysical environment relate to the construction of place-based identities across scales? What are the implications for ecosystem management? The latter part of this question is also addressed by a set of policy propositions for managing the Prespa basin which follow the results of this study and its limitations.

6.1. *Place identity is a powerful tool for a multi-scalar contextual analysis of person-environment interactions*

This work has demonstrated how relationships to places can be a means through which people consciously explore and present their identities. This research presented convincing evidence that the concept of place is useful for organizing participants' presentations of their personal values, beliefs, obligations, intentions, and commitments. This observation supports the assumption that there is conjunction

between self-concepts and place. For some participants, place and self are mutually constitutive to the extent that it is possible to speak of place identity. Following the examples presented here this conjunction is established at multiple spatial levels such as the home, neighborhood (village), region, and beyond.

This research provided rich evidence supporting the long-standing assertion that the home is of great significance to the person-place relationship. The family and the home locate participants' perspective and, therefore, constitute the core of meanings which they assign to elements and processes operating in the biophysical and the social environment at a variety of geographical scales. The home is the center of participants' experience at any life stage because it is a locale or setting where fundamental social relations are constituted and acted out. The significance of the home as a place is mostly derived from its conceptualization as a center of family relations. The ties between home and family can be so strong that for some participants the two are conflated. Social roles and responsibilities in a family in participants' talk explicate the importance of the home in the reproduction of gendered social relations in Prespa. They also contribute to the prominence of the issues related to work/occupation and career in participants' talk. The family, to paraphrase Benson (2001), supplies and edits participants' self-constituting narratives, and powerfully influences the structuring of their identities (p. 212).

For most participants in this research the home is a place where biographical experience interlocks with social processes and cultural practices. Being an important place for the reproduction of gendered relations, the home is central to participants' presentation of the self through concepts of group (social) identities. The home as a site for the reproduction of social relations over generations gives weight and stability

and extends the identity of a person. The predictable circumstances of the home, the repetition and sameness of everyday life, provide a stable sense of self in connection with both the social and material environment. In other words, the house and farmland that a family has owned for several generations anchor personal identity through generational continuity, which then contributes to a person's cultural identity, such as ethnic identity. The enduring materiality of the "family house" becomes a site for reproducing social and cultural identity over many generations. In a family's use of subsistence land and resources, the home also plays a significant role in the reproduction of social relations with nature in the predominantly agrarian communities in Prespa. These are some of the reasons why the home can become a source of belonging, security, and identity. In conclusion, the house provides geographical and temporal ties that bundle multiple identities – personal, social, and cultural. The temporality and spatiality of the home are, however, unstable, manifold, and negotiable. Such a conceptualization of the home makes drawing a boundary around it problematic. On the contrary, the evidence from this research implies that the home, as well as other places at larger geographical scales, is "open and porous" (Massey 1994, p. 5).

The examples of the importance of the home in participants' construction and presentation of identity also show that the emotional bonds between the participants and their places are not always positive; indeed, at best they are ambivalent. This is clear from the examination of the ways in which the concept of place mediates the construction and presentation of the self. This work demonstrates the importance of other, often faraway and even imagined, places. These other places inform the person and influence how she thinks about herself and her own place. This conclusion is connected with the observation that different places can be preferred over the course

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of life. Economic necessity requires many Prespiots to sacrifice or set aside their place of family attachments. In more general terms, however, people seek out places that match their existing or intended identities as their personal values, beliefs, obligations, intentions, and commitments change over the course of their lives. The participants in this research seek out places that match their identity in very different ways. Some participants are prompted to change the character of the place. This can be achieved through novel experiences and different ways of interacting with the biophysical and social environment in the place. This engagement often leads not only to new meanings of the place, but also of the self. For other participants, the sense of a lack of power and the negative experience of place amount to an overwhelming desire to be somewhere else. They seek to establish a family and make home elsewhere; for them it is not difficult to see themselves in another place. These examples prompt the idea of conceptualizing place as a process and emphasize the importance of human action in the construction and the production of place. Thus, in addition to being open and porous, place needs to be conceptualized as a process – it is always becoming.

Paradoxically, the construction of the self and place in participants' talk is strongly related to the idea of fixity and stability. This research provided overwhelming evidence for the construction of self-identity as bounded, stable, and enduring across time. The same applies to place. For instance, Prespiots tend to present Prespa as natural, stable, and fixed in time (through the accumulated history) and space (the physical geography of the basin). The conjunction between self-identity and place is most salient when they mutually reinforce stability. It is because of this, finally, that the home gains prominence. The need for stability can explain the efforts to groom and maintain a particular identity. In the narrative construction of identity this is often achieved through exclusion and ignorance of facts and events. In

the face of the complexity of everyday life, one can assume, the narrative construction of self-identity entails simplification and selective use of objective facts with the aim of constructing a stable and coherent sense of self and a positive sense of place. The mutual constitution of self-identity and place-identity is inevitably idiosyncratic, but the specific concepts of place held by individuals sharing a geographic area may overlap to a great extent and eventually precipitate a shared place identity. For instance, the power of Prespa is that it provides for a geographical and historical base to bundle multiple, sometimes even contradictory identities, both individual and collective.

This research has demonstrated that the concepts of place and place-based identity are powerful tools for a multi-scalar contextual analysis of person-environment interactions. We can think of the home as the geographic scale of place which significantly influences people's individual and group identification. However, as this research showed, the identity of Prespiots can be also defined by places at larger geographical scales (e.g., a village, a sub-basin, the whole basin, and a nation), or (most likely) a mixture of all. Thinking in terms of places helps Prespiots link any of the local-scale places (e.g., the home, a village, and the watershed) to the outside, (e.g., the global scale). Because place locates the perspective from which Prespiots assign meaning to their biophysical and the social environment, they may adopt different positions on an issue or focus on different values, depending on the importance of a particular place-based identity.

What distinguishes the places of smaller geographical extent, such as the home and village, from those of larger scale, such as the region, is the intensity and immediacy of engagement with the social and biophysical environment. As Norton

(2005) has noted, information and experiences developed with intimate knowledge of a place are nontransferable values, encoded into cultural information and attitudes, and passed from generation to generation (p. 352). This research identified some of the ways in which place-based experiences are essential to participants' sense of self and to their sense of family and community. At larger geographical scales the experience of place is more likely to be mediated by pre-established, existing constructs of place than by direct, corporeal experience. Yet, despite its size, and because of its visual prominence, Prespa can easily be experienced perceptually. It is due to these qualities of the Prespa region that a watershed approach to environmental management is easier to incorporate into the public consciousness. However, this particular way of seeing Prespa – a view from afar (a viewpoint) – tends to transform Prespa from space (a basin) into a "landscape" composed of such objects as lakes, mountains, islands, villages, and churches. This objective representation of the basin is always achieved from a particular perspective: as an ethnic place, as a place of man and nature, or as a tourism place. These presentations of Prespa are political because they emphasize some and exclude other characteristics of the region or groups of people living in the region, and also because they favor a particular vision, goal or cause of the beholder of the gaze. Importantly, the dynamic quality of place is suitable for adaptive ecosystem management and opens opportunities for those who pursue policy paths toward sustainable development of the Prespa region.

6.2. *Limitations of the study*

Despite the strong empirical case made by the findings of this study, limitations do exist, as with any study. The first comes from the fact that most of the ethnic groups in Prespa (e.g., Greek, Turkish, Albanian, Vlachos, and Roma) were not represented

or were underrepresented in the initial sample. In addition, the socio-economic status of the participants in the initial sample did not represent those at the two extremes of the spectrum (e.g., the very rich or the very poor). Due to language barriers, this study was based largely upon interview data and written sources in Macedonian and to a lesser extent in English. Another limitation of the study was the incomplete development of the theoretical categories in the preliminary grounded theory generated through this study.

These limitations need to be considered before generalizing the results of this study, that is, whether the findings of this study can be said to be relevant beyond the sample and context of this case-study or whether they are capable of supporting wider inference (Lewis and Ritchie 2003). Also, it is important to bear in mind that the findings of this study apply to a particular point in time and a particular context. Furthermore, the context may change over time, e.g., the structure and the role the family played in the traditional communities in Prespa. Lewis and Ritchie (2003) distinguish between three linked but separate concepts of generalizations: representational, inferential, and theoretical. Representational generalizations refer to "the parent population from which the sample is drawn" (e.g., the community of Prespa); inferential generalizations refer to "other settings in which similar conditions to those studied may exist" (e.g., Lake Ohrid basin); and theoretical generalizations are about contributions "to generating or enhancing ideas and theories" (p. 277). The third instance of generalization was discussed in the previous chapter (see section 5.6), which concluded that this study provides empirical evidence for some of the concepts and propositions in Sack's (1997) relational framework. Given the limitations outlined above, the potential for representational and inferential generalizations of the findings of this study is limited.

6.3. *Policy implications for Prespa basin management*

Raffaelli and Frid (2009) have argued recently that contemporary ecosystem ecology needs "a far greater relaxing of the term 'ecosystem' in order to accommodate those additional disciplines whose business is to understand human motivation" (p. 14). The contemporary conceptual frameworks underpinning ecosystem-based management link ecosystem conditions and human well-being through the concept of the use-value of ecosystem services. For instance, the "conceptual framework" (see Figure 8 below) elaborated by the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* project team (MEA; Alcamo and Bennett 2003, Hassan *et al.* 2005) links ecosystem services to human well-being through four major "constituents:" (1) security (personal safety, secure resource access, and security from disasters); (2) basic material for a good life (adequate livelihoods, sufficient nutritious food, shelter, and access to goods); (3) health (strength, feeling well, and access to clean air and water); and (4) good social relations (social cohesion, mutual respect, and the ability to help others). The relationships between ecosystem services and human well-being in the MEA model are "mediated" by socioeconomic factors; the greater the opportunity to purchase a substitute for degraded ecosystem service the higher the potential for mediation (see Figure 8).

This instrumental conceptualization of the environment (ecosystems), where ecosystem services ("supporting," "provisioning," "regulating," and "cultural") are conceived as "separable" and "substitutable" often tends to overlook "the less tangible social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of life quality" (Williams and Paterson 2008). For instance, note the difference in meaning of what is termed *shelter* in the MEA model and *home* in the concept of place. While, according to the MEA model, a

shelter can be easily replaced by another one, the home cannot be, as this research shows.
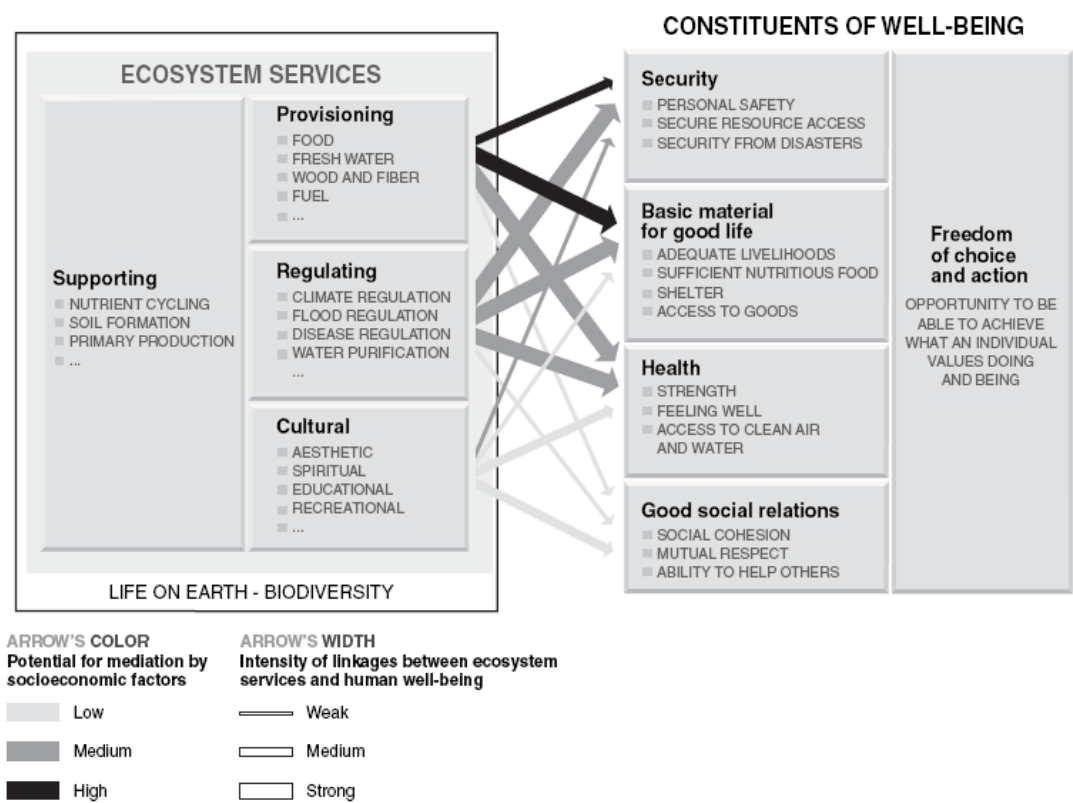

Figure 8. Linkages between Ecosystem Services and Human Well-being (Hassan *et al.* 2005, p. 28)

Scholars from various academic disciplines, such as human geography, environmental psychology, architecture and environmental sociology, have long argued that the affective and symbolic meaning of the environment can be addressed by turning to the concept of place and related ideas. By combining the biophysical and the social environment, and including meaning as the constituents of the self, the concept of place has been productively employed to understand how the environment contributes to human well-being through affective and symbolic bonds to specific places.

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This research has demonstrated that the construction of both individual and collective identity rest on place-based meanings. The evidence presented here demonstrates that the construction of identity is mediated by conceptualizations of place at multiple geographical scales. The concepts of place held by individuals and collectives help them organize reality in a meaningful manner and, more specifically, orient themselves in the social world, including geographically and historically. As this study has demonstrated, places are made meaningful for various reasons, such as an expression of personal distinctiveness, qualities and achievements, but also because they connect individuals and communities to their past and shape hopes for the future. Or, as Davenport and Anderson (2005) eloquently put it, "people assign meanings to places and derive meaning in their lives from places" (p. 627). More specifically, this research has repeatedly demonstrated that meanings ascribed to the biophysical environment are part and parcel of the construction of place-based identities across geographical scales.

The implication for ecosystem management is that people's perceptions and evaluations of ecosystems and their services are not based solely on utility criteria, but also depend on meanings arising in everyday experience and interactions with places where the self is constantly negotiated, constructed, and reconstructed. As this research has shown, the perception of the biophysical environment depends on how Prespiots construct their individual and collective identity. This is in accordance with previous research in environmental psychology that has repeatedly shown how place-based identity provides frameworks for the perception of the environment which in turn influences people's behavior (Williams and Patterson 1996, Davenport and Anderson 2005).

6.3.1. Create an overarching watershed-based identity as a means for fostering sustainable development in Prespa

The critical analysis of Prespiots' sense of place revealed how their view of the social and biophysical environment arises from their own particular, local context which is, nevertheless, always linked with the wider world. This analysis identified a range of experiences that are somehow essential to Prespiots' individual and collective identities. For these reasons, natural resource managers can benefit greatly from leaving the office, meeting Prespiots, and spending time in the region and listening to their stories. They need to take note of the meanings, feelings, beliefs, symbols, and values that Prespiots, as individuals or members of various social groups, associate with Prespa.

This study revealed that Prespiots construct simplified identities, for themselves and others, through selective attention and denial. Therefore, natural resource managers need to understand that it may not be possible to fully comprehend how Prespiots make meaning of their relationship with Prespa's environment. Moreover, following the conceptual framework which links ecosystem conditions and human well-being through the concept of the use-value of ecosystem services, natural resource managers tend to think of environmental conflicts as struggles over the use and control of natural resources, motivated by the desire of stakeholders to increase their well-being. However, empirical studies have shown that environmental conflicts are essentially intergroup conflicts arising over natural resources, but also political influence, and concern values, beliefs, and fairness (Opotow and Brook 2003). As Opotow and Brook (2003) have argued, "'real interests' of parties in conflict is to protect their dignity in the face of perceived disrespect, derogation, and moral

exclusion as much as to maintain control of a resource they see as crucial to their well-being" (p. 267).

As this study has demonstrated, meanings that Prespiots attach to Prespa, including its biophysical environment, may contribute significantly to their individual and collective identity. It was also showed that the constructions of Prespa's identity regularly involve exclusion and stereotyping, although in different ways and to a different extent, and can therefore exacerbate conflicts over environmental resources in the Prespa watershed. These identity-based conflicts in ecosystem management can be resolved through the creation of an overarching, inclusive place-based (ecosystem-wide) identity (Opotow and Brook 2003). The construction of Prespa's identity as a "place of man and nature" is a promising candidate because of its inclusiveness and the balance it strikes between the interests of various stakeholders, including biodiversity. With the strong underpinning in the concept of sustainable development, this construction is also sensitive to the region's history, social values, and cultural diversity. Thinking of the Prespa basin as a "place of man and nature" carries prospects for restoring Prespa's ecosystems, but also for cultural and economic recovery of the region. Indeed, as Plumwood (2002) argued, "the cultural, including the economic, recovery of the local dimension is an essential part of recovering the more rounded and integrated sense both of self and of place that must go into good ecological decision-making" (p. 76). Nevertheless, as Chapter 5.5 have argued, creating an overarching identity of Prespa as a "place of man and nature" ignores significant issues related to ethnic identity. While creating an overarching identity is a necessary step, Opotow and Brook (2003) have argued, it is also important to preserve pre-existing (subgroup) identities for the following reasons (p. 267-268):

- "First, preserving subgroup identities can increase the generalizability of constructive attitudes and conflict reduction processes beyond the immediate context." For instance, if Prespiots continue to interact as members of ethnic groups (e.g., Macedonians, Greeks, Albanians, Turks, and other ethnic groups) they are "more likely to extend goodwill" to other members of these groups, "than if they see the other person only as an individual, unlike others in their group;"

- "A second reason to preserve subgroup identities is that failure to do so may make participants [e.g., members of the different ethnic groups in Prespa] feel that their original identities are threatened or lost;"

- "A third reason to preserve subgroup identities is that people have an ideal level of distinctiveness from and similarity to other people. They want to be good members of their in-groups and do not want to lose their subgroup identities in superordinate groups."

Therefore, supporters of integrated ecosystem management in the Prespa watershed, to paraphrase Clayton and Opotow (2003), need to recognize the ways in which environmental issues reflect individual and group identities of Prespiots. The implication of this argument is that they need to design a planning process that provides wide-ranging and alternative opportunities and mechanisms for continued and authentic participation of stakeholders in order to recognize and appreciate stakeholders' place meanings. The goal of this participation process would be to identify management options that can foster the construction of an overarching, watershed-based identity. However, the managers and stakeholders in the Transboundary Prespa Park need to keep in mind that the meanings assigned to

Prespa's environments are complex and conflicting, and also an important source of Prespiots' sense of identity.

6.3.2. Embrace the politics of place identity

The proponents of watershed management – the most prevalent form of ecosystem management – argue that watersheds provide practical, tangible, management units to integrate human influence and physical, chemical, and biological processes (Davenport 2003, Brierley *et al.* 2006, Schlager and Blomquist 2008). While the idea of watersheds as ecologically meaningful management units is straightforward, in practice watershed boundary identification is not merely a scientific activity; indeed, it is always both a scientific and political activity (Wooley *et al.* 2002, Schlager and Blomquist 2008). Politics enters each watershed management initiative when decisions are being made about the appropriate scale at which to organize ecosystem planning efforts or, for instance, whether to include watersheds connected through human intervention (Schlager and Blomquist 2008). The management of the Transboundary Prespa basin has been no exception and over the last two decades the Prespa basin has been included in environmental regimes established at a number of geographical scales. The emerging polycentric environmental governance reflects the complex ecological, social and political issues in Prespa and the wider region of western Balkans (Antypas and Avramoski 2004).

However, as this research has demonstrated, agreement still seems to exist among Prespiots that the Prespa basin is the most appropriate ecologically meaningful scale for addressing the "fundamental management issues" that concern all three lake-bordering countries (SPP *et al.* 2005). Arguably, the congruence between the biophysical reality and the identity Prespiots seem to share can significantly enhance

the prospects for creating local ownership and a consensus for action. Yet, the managers of the Prespa basin need to understand the context of meanings ascribed to the biophysical environment and unravel the power relations and ideology shaping these meanings – the politics of place identity.

Following Williams and Paterson (1996), the politics of place identity can be defined as "the deliberate effort by individuals and groups to control the meaning of places" (p. 518) Following this logic, Hague (2005) recently argued that the key purpose of planning is to "create, reproduce or mould the identities of places through manipulation of the activities, feelings, meanings and fabric that combine into place identity" (p. 6). Indeed, place-making and place identity are implied in the initiatives leading to the establishment of Prespa as a transboundary protected area. The background paragraph taken from the *Agreement on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park Area* (EC 2010) and presented in the beginning of this dissertation is a good example. Yet, as this research has demonstrated, the emerging constructs of Prespa's identity are competing with other preexisting or contemporary constructs. It is important to note that the components of the biophysical environment in the watershed are involved in the tensions between the varied constructs of Prespa's identity. What the differing constructs of Prespa's identity share is the landscape way of seeing – a view from a particular perspective, such as nationalism, environmentalism or instrumentalism.

This study argues that Prespiots gaze upon the landscape of Prespa as if it were an object. The elements constituting the landscape, such as the lake and the mountains, the islands and churches, in some ways stand out or speak to them. Sometimes these features are seen as natural, objective, measurable and independent

of human signification, but most often they are nodes in a complex web of meanings, both personal and shared. The multiple meanings Prespiots ascribe to the biophysical environment derive from their indirect and conceptual, but also direct and experiential, involvement with the biophysical and social environment in the region. Enmeshed in such a web of meanings, the biophysical environment is at the same time natural and cultural, objective and subjective. This blurring of nature and culture, of the natural environment and cultural artifacts, of the biophysical and the social environment is even more evident in their recollections of everyday life in various settings and places. Place, with all its components, biophysical and social, and self are mutually constitutive to the extent that it is possible to speak of place identity at various geographical scales.

This research improves our understanding of the ways Prespiots strategically construct alternative place-based identities at various scales to advance their political goals. Policy-makers, managers, and Prespiots need to understand the politics of place to unravel power relations that divide and marginalize and comprehend what it takes to develop a shared sense of place that facilitates more inclusive and democratic environmental governance in Prespa. Practices of ecosystem management reveal many examples that support this recommendation. Light *et al.* (1998) illustrate this point in their study in Minnesota where they concluded that "watershed organizations often attempt to motivate new ways of thinking and acting by creating or building on a local sense of place, community, stewardship and place-based identity" (p. 34). This case study supports such conclusions and recommendations but emphasizes the need to understand the scales at which a sense of place is most salient in people's daily lives so that management planning can cultivate positive ones and help reconcile or harmonize the contrasting place-based meanings.

As this study shows, Prespiots' shared sense of place and identity at the basin scale has developed over multiple generations. Nonetheless, this research also argues that the biophysical and social processes underpinning the development of a shared sense of place at the basin level were significantly modified during the first half of the 20th century. Therefore, while Prespiots still exhibit a strong sense of place at the basin scale, the substantial social and economic interaction with other Prespiots as well as interaction with the biophysical environment currently take place at smaller geographical scales, often confined within national borders. This may well be related to the observation that political affiliations (e.g., national identity) can transcend bioregional identifications (e.g., watershed-based identity).

6.3.3. Encourage research on place

Finally, this study demonstrates that the person-place relationship includes both instrumental and affective aspects and that qualitative investigation of person-place bonds is particularly well suited to understanding the symbolic and emotional aspects of the human–environment relationship. The arguments presented here point to the need for ecosystem-based management to expand analysis beyond mere technical problems and scientific concerns about ecosystem services' provisioning and develop research programs and procedures for ecosystem management planning that account for place-based meanings. For, as this study demonstrates, some of the affective meanings Prespiots assign to Prespa translate into strong emotional bonds to the region. However, there have been concerns that place-based meanings and the associated values concerning the environment, particularly conflicting values, are more difficult to incorporate into the management planning process than data about ecological and socio-economic systems (Brierley *et al.* 2006). Currently there is little

direction as to how natural resource managers can incorporate the idea of place into ecosystem-based management. For instance, Williams and Stewart (1998) have developed recommendations about how the concept of sense of place can be systematically applied in day-to-day ecosystem management. These authors suggested that natural resource managers should: (1) "know and use the variety of local place-names;" (2) "communicate management plans in locally recognized, place-specific terms;" (3) "understand the politics of place;" and (4) "pay close attention to places that have special but different meanings to different groups."

Recognizing the difficulty of the task of identifying the options for sustainable living in a place, Norton (2005) advocates for "a deep examination of the community's values, aspirations, and sense of meaningfulness, along with a great deal of deliberation and social learning" (p. 433). However, as Cantrill (2004) has argued, when discussing policy options the "focus on the interaction between humans and the biosphere may trigger attitudinal backlash grounded in their preference of social factors over those of nature" (p. 165). In addition, as Brandenbrug and Carroll (quoted in Davenport and Anderson 2005, p. 629) note, what stakeholder share in interviews may not be expressed in the context of a public participation process or quantitative surveys. It is for these reasons that Cantrill (2004) recommended that natural resource managers use written records of people living in an area concerning special places or interviews with stakeholders to tap into stakeholders' place-based meanings. These and similar qualitative methods, although rather time consuming, allow for the exploration of nuances in meanings which people attach to places and understanding why people think and feel about them the way they do.

The results of this study suggest that natural resource managers in Prespa can benefit from identifying other constructs of Prespa's identity, for instance, by interviewing a wide range of social groups in the basin (e.g., Macedonian, Greek, Albanian, Turkish, Gipsy, Vlachos, and various marginal groups). Future research can also assist environmental managers in identifying the variety of place-names used throughout the watershed, but also registering and collecting literary works, poetry, popular songs and legends concerning Prespa.

This study combined narrative analysis of open-ended ethnographic interviews and other textual and visual materials with grounded theory to understand how perceptions of place and self and the associated values can be integrated into ecosystem-based management and thereby into the decision-making process. By tapping into Prespiots' sense of place this research offers a procedural approach to taking note of stakeholders' place-based values and uncovering potential conflicts. Natural resource managers can use this approach in combination with the extended and authentic participation of stakeholders in order to develop policies that address their concerns and meet their aspirations while maintaining the ecological integrity of Prespa's ecosystem.

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APPENDIX 1:

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS IN PRESPA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

(Catsadorakis and Malakou 1997)

1900: The turn of the century finds Prespa in a remote corner of the Ottoman empire, away from large urban centers. The closest towns were Koritsa (today Korce in Albania) and Monastir (today Bitola in FYROM;…). Prespiots participate in 'the Macedonian Struggle' for their liberation from the Turks and their incorporation into Greece and not into Bulgaria.

1912–1913: The end of the two Balkan wars finds Prespa embodied in the Greek State.

1913: Bucharest Treaty. Prespa is ascribed to Greece. The agreed boundaries conceded to Greece the present Albanian part of Lake Megali Prespa [Greater Prespa Lake] and many villages around its periphery.

1914–1918: During World War I Prespa hosts French troops as do the rest of Central and Western Macedonia.

1915–1930: A large emigration wave of Prespiots takes place mainly to the U.S.A. and Canada.

1919: Neuilly's Treaty. Prespa is again ascribed to Greece.

1923:	A total of 325 Greek refugees from the Black Sea coast of Turkey settle in three villages (Lemos, Lefkonas and Pili) … and add to a population of ca. 5630.
1920–1930:	Opaia, a lakeshore village, is abandoned due to malaria.
1920–1940:	Intense building occurs with funds coming from emigrants abroad. Most present-day houses date from that era…
1935–1945:	The Agios Germanos stream is partly diverted to discharge into Lake Megali Prespa [Greater Prespa Lake] instead of Lake Mikri Prespa [Lesser Prespa Lake], to avert flooding and reclaim agricultural land.
1940–1944:	Italian troops occupy the area during the war.
1944–1949:	Greek Civil war. The area is among those that suffered the most. Many people flee to the Eastern Bloc countries after the end of the war. Seven villages are deserted.
1953:	Three of the abandoned villages (Vrondero, Agios Germanos, Kalithea) are resettled by Vlachs, nomadic livestock herders from Epirus and Thessaly; four villages fall to ruins.
1961–1972:	Further emigration takes away ca. 45% of the 1961 population...
1965:	The land reclamation works start for the installation of a surface irrigation system. The farmland zone around the lake is changed dramatically by the works.
1968:	Foreign naturalists discover in Prespa an ornithological paradise with pelican colonies and a rich wildlife and flora.

1971:	First protection measures are taken by prefectoral decrees for five different sub-areas withwaterbird colonies. A paved road is constructed, connecting most of Prespa villages to the town of Florina, the prefectoral centre.
1973–1977:	The second phase of works for the irrigation scheme starts. Farming is still extensive.
1974:	Designation of the National Park.
1975–1981:	A second wave of emigration removes almost 25% of the 1973 population, mainly to work in the fur industry in the nearby town of Kastoria and in Western Germany…
1981:	Greece becomes a member of European Union (then EEC) and the impact upon the development of the area is soon felt.
1984–1987:	The area is chosen for a pilot Integrated Mediterranean Programme (IMP) action financed by EEC. A third phase to accomplish the irrigation scheme is embodied in the works which have an adverse environmental impact. An unnecessary fish breeding station is built on invaluable wet meadows.
1987–1990:	A quick turn towards intensive agriculture of beans is observed, which eventually occupies all the cultivable area within the irrigation scheme.
1991:	The Society for the Protection of Prespa is established.”

APPENDIX 2:

TIMELINE OF MAJOR EVENTS IN PRESPA FROM PREHISTORY TO THE PRESENT

(Jonovski 2002)

5th century BC: pile dwellings on the shore of Prespa Lake, at the contemporary [village] Nakolec.

The Roman Empire: important crossroad; the well-known road Via Egnatia passed through it [Prespa].

The end of 9th and the beginning of 10th century: [Prespa is] an important educational center related to the activities of St. Kliment and St. Naum and the medieval city of Devol.

976:    Prespa becomes the capitol of the Kingdom of Samuel; the castle of the king was on the island of Achilles in the Lesser Prespa Lake.

980:    Samuel built the cathedral church on the island of Achilles.

982:    Samuel transferred the remains of St. Achilles from Larissa to the island in Lesser Prespa Lake; the basilica was built in his name and since then the island bears his name.

1014:   After the defeat at Belasica Mountain on July 29, Samuel has returned, most probably, to the island of Achilles where, according to historical records, died on October 6, the same year.

1014 (October 15): the ruling of the Kingdom of Samuel was overtaken by his son Gavril Radomir with the capitol on the island of Achilles, as before.

1015: King Gavril Radomir was killed by his cousin Ivan Vladislav.

1016: Ivan Vladislav transferred the capitol of the Kingdom of Samuel to Ohrid, along with the seat of the patriarchate.

1016: Ivan Vladislav killed the duke of Duklja, Jovan Vladimir, Samuel's son-in-law and the husband of his daughter Kosara.

1018: After he conquered Ohrid, the emperor Basil the Second, arrived in Prespa where he stayed for 55 days, which was the longest stay on the territory of the Kingdom of Samuel. That year Basil the Second constructed the well-known fortresses "Vasilida" and "Konstantion," in the northwestern part of Prespa.

1018: Ivec, army leader and the last defender of the Kingdom of Samuel, was defeated which marked the end of the Kingdom of Samuel and Prespa fell under the rule of Byzantium.

1191: the church of St. Gjorgji in [the village of] Kurbinovo was constructed.

13th century: Prespa was part of the Despotate of Epirus, then of the Bulgarian state, and in 1261 was again part of Byzantium.

12-13th century: the church of St. Ilija in the village of Grnchari was built.

14th century: the following churches were built: St. Peter in the island of Golem Grad, St. Sava in [the village of] Pretor and St. the Mother of God

in Mali Grad island; also several cave churches were constructed along the southwestern shore of Prespa Lake. In this century Prespa is part of the state of the Serbian king Dushan.

16th century: the first hajuk bands were formed.

1607: the monastery of St. the Mother of God in [the village of] Slimnica was constructed.

17th century: the Ottoman traveler Evliya Çelebi passed through Prespa.

18th century: Prespa was devastated by Ali Pasha of Yannina.

19th century: 50 churches were built or reconstructed in the villages in Prespa, as well as in the town of Resen.

1886: after Prespa Lake froze, a pack of wolves appeared in Golem Grad island and attacked the livestock which had been brought from the nearby villages during the winter.

1888: at the village of German (Greece) an epitaph was found, dedicated in 993 to the parents of King Samuel, Nikola and Ripsimi as well as his brother David.

1894: the church of St. Kiril and Metodij in Resen was sanctified; in the house of Doctor Hristo Tatarchev the first congress of VMRO took place.

1900: There were 7 watermills for flour; there is none left since a decade ago.

1903: Prespa actively participated in the Ilinden uprising when Turks set in fire about twenty villages in Prespa.

1907:   Kuzman Popov of [the village of] Slimnica, a migrant worker, was the first to take his wife with him in the US (only men were going to work abroad before);

1908:   the first signs of the Young Turk Revolution were observed in Resen.

1912-1913:   Prespa was divided by three states [Serbia, Albania and Greece] during the Balkan Wars.

1914-1918   for three years, during the World War I, the frontline run through Prespa whereby the armies of Germany and Bulgaria were deployed in the northern part whereas the armies of France and Serbia in the southern part of Prespa.

1915:   Bulgarian rule was established in Prespa and an airport was established in the meadows near Resen for the purposes of the German military aviation.

1916:   A theatre of the Bulgarian military was established in the village of Rajca, situated in a building that was used especially for theatre plays and as a cinema. The first tambourine orchestra was established in Resen and also the first soccer matches took place between the city team and the teams of the Bulgarian and German armies.

1917:   French aircrafts bombed Resen several times during the World War I. The same year a duel between a German and a French aircraft took place over Prespa Lake, in the vicinity of the villages of Pretor and Slimnica where the French aircraft fell in the lake. In

1917 [the Bulgarian] King Boris and his brother, duke Kiril, visited their troops at the frontline in Pretor and near the Monastery of Slimnica.

1918:   There was an outbreak of the Spanish flu in Prespa.

1919:   Serbian rule was established in Prespa and the larger villages in Prespa.

1920:   The first sport associations were established in Resen and Jankovec.

1922:   There was a high school in Resen and 14 primary schools in the villages of Prespa.

1923:   Greece handed over Mala Prespa to Albania. The Tudjarovci [family] of Resen procured the first wheat threshing machine.

1924:   Aleksandar Karagjorgjevic, the King of Yugoslavia, visited Prespa, that is, [the village of] Pretor, on the eastern shore of Prespa Lake. The theatre play "Makedonska Krvava Svadba" [Macedonian Blood Wedding] was played in Resen the same year.

1925:   The barracks in Resen were built; today they host the Gymnasium of Resen. In 1990s, part of the barracks was converted into the first Youth Factory in Macedonia which regenerated synthetic fur produced in the "Prespatekst" factory; it was destroyed in a fire in the next year.

1925:   A "Sokol" association [gymnastics and wrestling association] was started in Resen, managed by the head of the district and other Serbs. The firs artesian wells were dug in Resen which were used

for irrigation of orchards. Krste Strezov constructed the first artesian well which was some 100 m deep. Also, in 1925, investigations were carried out in the Zavir abyss in Mala Prespa whereby it was established that water from Prespa Lake flows to Lake Ohrid via underground channels.

1926-1927   Serbian authorities arrested and convicted a few followers of VMRO; Joshe Globochki, headman of Podmochani, Pande Jonov, the president of the Municipality of Podmochani from Pretor, and Alekso Pargov, also from Pretor, were murdered.

1927:   There were plans to construct a naval base near the Pretor River, on the eastern shore of Prespa Lake; however, due to security reasons the base was built in the vicinity of a settlement, that is, in the riparian village of Asamati.

1928:   The first military patrol vessels were brought in Prespa Lake for the needs of the naval unit in Asamati, under the command of Ohrid. In 1928, the price of 20 acres was 250 napoleons [gold coins], due to the high demand for land by the returning migrant workers from America.

1932:   The firs opera play was performed in Resen by the youth of [the village of] Jankovec.

1934:   Mali Beg evicted the villagers of Dolna Gorica, in Mala Prespa and, following a decree by Serbian authorities, were resettled in Kosovo and Metohija. In this year there were 5 trucks and 1 bus in Resen.

1936:   About twenty Prespiots joined the international brigades fighting in the Spanish Civil War; in the same year, the club of Jewish youth of Bitola and other cities organized the first summer camp in [the village of] Pretor.

1939:   There were about twenty trading cooperatives in Prespa; the first colony of teachers, attended by over 60 teachers from all over the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, was organized the same year in the village of Asamati.

1940:   The second colony of teachers of Yugoslav character took place in Asamati, attended by over 200 teachers.

1941:   Following the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on April 10, the German army arrived in Stenje, meeting the Italian army; an Albanian sub-prefecture, including the municipalities of Carev Dvor, Podmochani and Ljubojno, was established in [the village of] Carev Dvor.

1942:   Mite Bogoevski of Bolno and Stiv Naumov of Bitola died at the village of Bolno; Prespa Lake reached the highest water level, higher than ever known before, and similar to that of 1917.

1943:   The Prespa meeting of the CK KPM [Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia] took place in the vicinity of [the village of] Oteshevo.

1944:   By mid-September, people's rule was established in all settlements in Prespa whereas on November 5, the same year, the last German

soldiers passed through Resen as they were retreating from Bitola to Ohrid.

1947: Markos [Vafiadis], the general of DAG [Democratic Army of Greece] visited [the village of] Asamati where he established the Greek government [Provisional Democratic Government].

1948: Beginning of the construction of the resort hotels in Oteshevo and Carina, along the road to Ohrid, through Galichica, [the construction] including political prisoners.

1949-1953: In Prespa existed rural cooperatives which proved to be inadequate in the field of agriculture.

1953: Ilija Grbchev of the village of Nakolec conducted the first experiment in cultivating rice in Prespa.

1954: The first cinema theatre "Prvi Maj" [First of May] was opened in Resen with Kiril Jonovski of Pretor as its first manager and scenographer. Drama, chorus and music sections, as well as wind instruments orchestra, functioned within its framework.

1955: A new administrative division of Prespa was enacted, establishing two municipalities: Resen and Asamati, under the jurisdiction of the existing District of Ohrid.

1956: Josip Broz [Tito] visited Prespa with the intent to attend the ceremony in Pretor concerning the start of the construction of the hydro-melioration system for irrigation of Prespa plains and pumping stations in [the villages of] Pretor and Sirhan; in that year

several hundreds of refugees from Hungary were sheltered in Oteshevo and Carina.

1956: The teacher Pande Eftimov observed that water from a spring at the mountain pass Gjavato flows both to the east and west, that is, there was an occurrence of bifurcation whereby it flows to both the Aegean and the Adriatic Sea basins.

1957: Only the municipality of Prespa remained to function in the Prespa area; in the same year the first tourist-catering facilities were built in [the village of] Pretor on the eastern shore of Prespa Lake;

1961: Prespanka, the first factory in Resen processing fruits, was opened and the first boat "Makedonija" was brought in Prespa Lake. Risto Bimbilovski of Bitola, a marathoner, swam across Prespa Lake, following a route from Oteshevo to Pretor, some 13 kilometers in length.

1962: The level of Prespa Lake rose for the third time in the 20th century above the level of 855 meters [above the sea level] and the fist 150-passanger-seats hydro-bus set sail in the lake.

1964: The first Prespa boat race took place whereby yachters from Prespa, Ohrid and Struga participated.

1966: Two mongooses were brought to Golem Grad island from the island of Mlet in the Adriatic Sea in order to exterminate the numerous snakes.

1967: The Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito visited Prespa, accompanied by highest Macedonian officials. "Agroplod" factory

begun to operate in Resen and the first archeological excavations in Golem Grad island took place that year.

1971:   "Prespa-ski," a Yugoslavia-wide sport event took place, with the participation of renowned aces from the country and abroad.

1974:   the first Prespa orchard following the pillar-system was planted in Pretor.

2000:   A trilateral meeting of the prime ministers of Greece, Albania, and Macedonia was held in the village of German in Dolna Prespa [Lower Prespa] (Greece) at which they agreed to declare Prespa as an international park. In [the village of] Oteshevo, the International Symposium for Sustainable Development of Prespa took place the same year.

2001   The first Prespa Vine Fair was organized in the village of Dolna Gorica in Mala Prespa [Small Prespa] at which participated, along with the hosts, winemakers from Prespa in the Republic of Macedonia who have been supplying vine to Mala Prespa since old times.

2002   the lowest water level of Lake Prespa, at about 843 m [above the sea level] was observed, that is, 8 meters below the widely accepted normal level. Also, in January, the same year, the two Prespa Lake froze whereby the ice cover was 5-10 cm thick.

September 26, 2002 – the "Macedonian Apple Days" were organized in Resen for the first time by the local government in cooperation with the GTZ – the German Association for Technical Cooperation, the Canadian

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Center for International Studies and Cooperation, the Macedonian Federation for Enterprise Development and the for Development Group – apple growing subsection. After the first apple was picked in the orchard of the share company "Agroplod," in Resen, and where some 20 years ago a world record in apple production was achieved, an fruit-growing exhibition was opened, and a seminar of apple production was organized, whereas in the city center folklore groups from Resen, Pustec (Mala Prespa) [Small Prespa] and from Ptolemaida (Greece) participated in cultural-artistic performance…

2002   A 30-meter-tall and 12-meter-wide cross was erected on the Hill of Podmochani, donated by Boris Nichkov of Podmochani, a migrant worker in America.