

# Disrupted Continuity and Commemoration of the Deceased: Case of IDPs in Georgia

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## Abstract

Material Objects play a crucial role in sustaining memory about the deceased ancestors and besides, play a significant role in creating a connection between people and a place of their residence. The aim of this research is to show how the memory about the ancestors and an attachment to the place is sustained when the access to the material culture and land are restricted. The research is based on the ethnography done in Koda settlement for internally displaced people (IDPs) in Georgia. IDPs had to flee from their villages due to the military conflict in 2008 from South Ossetia and leave behind all their material belongings. The results show that visiting graves are crucial because a. IDPs commemorate their ancestors there and b. graves create a possibility for social immortality for the living ones. Both are sustained through verbal commemoration of deceased mainly during toasting. However, due to the lack of access to the graves the unity between the dead and the living is disrupted, as unity is possible only through the place of birth and of burial.

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## Introduction

Death phenomenon has long been a topic of interest for social anthropologists. Burial rituals (Robben 2004) dead commemoration (Hallam and Hockey 2001) and ancestor worship (Kopytoff 1971) are the topics which were analyzed by various researchers. During the mortuary rituals the cultural values of the people and their understanding of life is strengthened. (Metcalf and Huntington 1991). Furthermore, It has been highlighted that the deceased play important role and influence the lives of the living ones (Astuti 1995; Williams 2003).

The death related rituals are crucial in Georgian culture as well. Visiting graves is a part of the traditions which people find very important to maintain. Firstly, the process of burial is itself very important. There are strictly defined rules about the way people should be buried and the way the graves should be made. Secondly, it is important to visit the graves in order to take care of them and by this to illustrate that the deceased are still remembered. The grave is a place which contains and represents the memory of the whole chain of relatives and creates the sense of belonging to the line of ancestors as well as to the place where they are buried.

The place of burial becomes even more important for the internally displaced people (IDPs) as they cannot visit them anymore. In August 2008 due to the 5-day war between Georgia and Russia on the territory of South Ossetia, 26 000 inhabitants of the region had to leave their houses and flee to other parts of the country. Together with other belongings internally displaced people (IDPs) lost access to the graves of their family members. Khutsishvili (N.D.) underscores the significance of graves for sIDPs and argues that they have a sacred meaning for them. Thus, the loss of a grave is an important problem which IDPs are trying to solve at the new place of residence.

The material objects related to the deceased are important as they contain the memory about the dead person. Radley (1990) argues that material objects are significant as they sustain the memory about the deceased. The belongings of the person can be kept even after their death, which may ensure that the dead person will be remembered (Radley 1990). Hallam and Hockey (2001) also relate the material objects to the commemoration of the dead. According to the authors, the living ones create the material representations of the deceased in order to fill the loss of the person. The material objects representing the dead are crucial in the societies where the deceased play an important role in the lives of the living ones. Williams (2003) describes how the identity of living ones is sustained by keeping the dead as part of the community. Finally, material objects may play important role in creating a sense of belongingness to the certain place (David and Wilson 2002). However, the literature on memory and material culture does not show how the lack of the material objects influences the memory about the deceased and an attachment to the place. Thus, the aim of the research is to show how is the memory about deceased sustained by IDPs in Georgia when there is a rupture with their material representations?

In order to find answers to the research question, I did ethnographic research in one of the IDP settlements in Koda, Kvemo Kartli region, Georgia. During the research period I did informal, semi-structured interviews with the IDPs. Besides the interviews, I did observations on the field, which gave me an opportunity to gain an insight into the everyday practices of people – including practices related to the deceased. As for the interviews, they helped me to find out the meaning of the rituals that IDPs practice.

The thesis is divided into 5 chapters. In the first chapter I will discuss the literature related to social memory, material objects and place in order to illustrate the importance of material culture in sustaining memory and in place-making. The second chapter will be a short

historical overview of the Russia-Georgia conflict in 2008 and I will describe the conditions in which IDPs live now. In the third chapter the research methodology will be discussed in more details. The fourth chapter will represent the results: I will highlight main findings of my research and analyze them in relation to the existing literature and theoretical framework.

## **Chapter 1 : Material Culture, Commemoration of the Deceased and Place-making in Anthropological Discourse**

Nothing can be more universal than death, however the practices connected to it vary from one culture to another (Metcalf and Huntington 1991). As Metcalf and Huntington put it (1991), the above mentioned twofold character of the phenomenon can explain the interest in death among anthropologists. According to the authors, the history of the research in the field of death can be traced back to 19<sup>th</sup> century to the works of Tylor, Frazer and Durkheim which were one of the first and the most important contributions to the study of the death phenomenon. Nowadays there is a growing interest in the anthropology of death and the phenomenon is studied from the number of different angles (Robben 2004). In the following chapter I will firstly discuss how a memory can be stored in material culture. Secondly, I will show why it is important to keep a memory about deceased. Furthermore, the connection between the deceased and the material culture will be highlighted. And finally I will illustrate how the material culture can give a meaning to the place.

### **1.1 Memory in Material Culture**

Material objects may play a crucial role in the social world. Woodward (2007) writes about importance of material culture in the social sciences. He writes that a concept of material culture can be found in the works of the founders of sociology and anthropology. However a topic became central for researchers only at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Woodward 2007: 29). According to Woodward, scholars in the field of material cultures are mainly interested in meanings that are attached to material objects. As the author puts it, objects carry social as well as emotional meanings, which may vary from one individual to another. Consequently, individuals need to understand the objects in relation to others – how others understand the meaning of the same object (Woodward 2007:14).

Not only the meaning is attached to the objects, but material world also contains memory. According to Hallam and Hockey memory is both an ability to remember and a representation of what is remembered (Hallam and Hockey 2001:3). However, it is worth mentioning, that the understanding of memory has changed through the history. Carruthers argues, that in the middle ages memory was perceived as a storage room which was placed in certain part of the individual's brain (quoted in Hallam & Hockey 2001:29). The understanding of the concept of memory kept changing and it was first in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Halbwach's work on collective memory (1992), when the shift was made from individual memory to the memory which is located in the external world outside a person.

Connerton emphasizes the importance of social memory and argues that social memory is knowledge which is based on the past experience and legitimizes the present social order (1989:3). He discusses three types of memory: individual, which involves biographical knowledge of the self of a particular person; cognitive memory, which refers to remembering rules, meanings of word, facts and habit memory which is memory inscribed into the human body. Performative actions play significant role in habit memory, memory becomes embodied during the performative actions and thus creates space for social memory to be transferred from one to the following generation. Thus, commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices are crucial in sustaining and transmitting social memory (Connerton 1989:7).

The social aspects of the memory can also be traced in Assmann's approach to the concept of memory (2006). The author distinguishes two types of memory: cultural and communicative. While cultural memory is transmitted hierarchically from one generation to the following and is sustained through traditions, communicative memory is a type of memory which is shared among individuals. It exists and is sustained through communication. With such approach the author emphasizes the social aspects which are involved in individual memory.



While discussing the memory, Radley (1990) underscores the importance of material objects in the process of remembering. He claims that the memory cannot be limited only to its psychological understanding as remembering is not only something that is stored in individual's brain, but rather is a process which takes place in the material and verbal worlds. Intentionally or unintentionally people create material objects which live longer than themselves creators and ensure people's existence after their biological death.

The relation of material objects and memory is important in the case of IDPs, as these people do not have an access to their material belongings, which may affect their memory and thus their identity and their social order.

## **1.2 Memory about the Deceased**

Material objects may sustain memory about various events, historical facts or about individuals. Below I will discuss political, cultural and individual reasons for keeping a memory about the deceased. The deceased play an important role in the lives of the living ones as certain political or national meanings can be attached to the deceased. Verdery (1999) illustrates how the meaning of dead bodies can alter through political changes. An act of reburial of certain deceased may become a political action (Verdery 1999). Dead bodies are effective political symbols and can be sites of political profit. Robben (2000) writes about the bodies of deceased people which disappeared during the military regime in Argentina. Lost people and lost bodies created a feeling of uncertainty among the relatives of the disappeared ones. Merridale (2000) writes about the importance of the bones of the victims of repressions in Soviet Union. She illustrates how these bones lead people to the public ceremonial of collective death, whereas before death was a personal issue: people could not discuss it with others because of the regime.

Besides the above written, keeping the memory is an important part of cultures where it is believed that the deceased continue to exist after death. Bloch and Astuti in “Are the ancestors dead?” (N.D.) write about the existing communication with the ancestors in Vezo, Madagascar. They claim that even though the people are aware that the ancestors are dead, they remain present in the social world of those who are alive. Astuti describes a death of an old woman in Vezo village and argues that though a person died, she was not perceived as “wholly dead.” She was believed to dance through her children and grand children on her own funeral (1995:121). Williams also writes that for Manus, gypsies from the central France, dead people disappear from sight, however, they still remain as parts of the community. They continue to be important actors in the society and their “presence” in the community plays a crucial role in keeping the identity of Mānus and their group solidarity (Williams 2003:13). Kopytoff (1971) goes even further and argues that among Suku in Africa there is not a distinction between the ancestors and the elderly people and they create a continuum. The elderly people are treated with respect and are even worshiped and they keep the importance after their death (Kopytoff 1971).

As the dead are kept as parts of the society, communication with them is sustained as well. Khutsishvili (2009) writes about dreams as a way of communication with the relatives who have passed away in Georgia. She argues that for Georgians dreams are one of the most important ways of communication with the deceased. Communication might have different reasons. On the one hand, deceased guard the living ones, warn them about some events which may happen in the future, or even tell them the day of their death, on the other hand, a deceased demand attention from their relatives (Khutsishvili 2009). The living ones might even be punished for the lack of attention towards the deceased (Khutsishvili 2009). Thus it is important to keep a memory about the deceased either for political purposes, or for keeping

their social identity or for avoiding punishment and gaining some profit from them. Mostly the memory of the deceased are kept through material culture.

### **1.3 Memory about the Deceased in Material Culture**

Material objects are surely one of the main sources to sustain memory about the deceased people. Hallam and Hockey argue that material objects such as photos or graves keep the memory about the deceased through the practices related to them (2001:2). According to the authors, various death rituals involve material objects, visual images and written texts. These objects mediate relations with the deceased (Hallam and Hockey 2001:2). Hallam and Hockey claim that after death, people disappear from the view of the living ones. This creates a high possibility that they might be forgotten. “At the time of death, embodied persons disappear from view, their relations with others come under threat” (2001:5). As a reaction to this, the living ones try to create a symbolic representation of dead relatives as an attempt to keep them “alive.” As the authors put it, “where material objects are designed as aspects or extensions of persons, they can become potent resources of memories” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:14). Thus, dead people continue to be a part of this world through the material objects (Hallam and Hockey 2001).

With such an approach the authors illustrate a link between internal processes, such as memory and an external world, such as material culture. The memorials are understood as the forms of external culture, but they evoke thoughts and memories of people, which is already an internal, individual action (Hallam and Hockey 2001:4). Museums, memorials and cemeteries serve as “sites of memory making” (Hallam and Hockey 2001:5).

However, different people may have different attitudes towards the material objects representing the dead. Below I will illustrate the difference of placing and treating the graves among Manus (Williams 2003) and Vezo (Astuti 1995) people. On the one hand, Williams

argues that family graves, which are common for Manus, represent the whole group (2003:15-17). The Manus visit the graves as they visit the trailers of their relatives: “When traveling for leisure or work and passing through a locale where kin are buried, Manus are expected to stop and greet them just as they do when unexpectedly meeting other Manus trailers on the road” (Williams 2003:17).

On the other hand, Astuti writes about Vezo people who locate the graves of their deceased far away from their villages in order to keep the separation between the worlds of the dead and the living ones (Astuti 1995:106-122). According to her, there is a clear separation of life and death among Vezo people (Astuti 1995:106-123). Village is considered to be ‘cold’ while the graves are considered to be ‘hot’ – which means that there is no life in them. Death in a village blurs the separation of the two worlds, which is recreated by the burial, when the corpse of a deceased is taken away from the village (Astuti 1995:106-123).

In their previous villages, IDPs used to have the cemeteries nearby their houses and similarly to Manus people they would visit the graves frequently. An intended separation with the deceased described by Astuti is not a case among IDPs. On the contrary, through graves the IDPs give meaning to the place. The place becomes ‘their’ if the graves of the family members are located there.

#### **1.4 Material Culture, Place and Ancestors**

It is not only material culture that gains meaning in relation to the dead, but also the place where the material objects are located, becomes important. Material culture created by people at certain places gives them the right over the place as well, thus the grave may give a meaning to the place/land too. Below I will discuss spiritual connection to place, a connection through material objects and a connection via the line of ancestors.

Discussing the concept of place, Harvey argues that place is a social construct, which on the one hand is based on social processes within time and space and, on the other hand is a space where the identity, imagined communities and power are located (1996:294). Combining the above aspects of place, the author claims that place is “internally heterogeneous, dialectical and dynamic configurations of relative ‘permanencies’ within the overall spatio-temporal dynamics of socio-ecological processes” (1996:294).

Place can be a tool for state representatives to organize economical and social issues. Rogers (2009) discusses the example of Soviet Union, where the resettlement of people served organizing a new economic order. On the other hand, place may be connected to the identity of people. Harvey refers to Heidegger’s understanding of place, for whom, the roots of humans can be found in places (1996:301). Heidegger uses the concept of “dwelling” through which it is possible to create a spiritual unity between humans and things.

Other authors also highlight spiritual connection to place. According to Brueggemann (quoted in Harvey 1996) place has a historical meaning for the people living there. They know what happened there in the past. Through this knowledge and the memory they create their identity and keep connection with the past generation (quoted in Harvey 1996:304-305). Morley and Robins argue that the identities of people are connected to the place. Besides the identity, place contains culture too. (quoted in Harvey 1996:305). Basso also underscores the connection between place and culture and claims that place itself becomes a symbol of culture and by this shapes “moral character of its people” (quoted in Harvey 1996:305). Following the above assumptions Harvey states that “memories built around places cannot easily be shared with outsiders” (1996:305).

Candea (2010) goes beyond these metaphysical relations between place and identity and analyses an actual connection between material objects and people. He attempts to overcome

the difference of insiders and outsiders discussed above, and argues that the different attitude to place is due to the relations that locals and tourists have with other people and subjects (2010:74). According to the author, people establish relation with land through connections to the material objects (2010:83). Candea refers to Latour's words and argues that material world plays an important role in sustaining the durability of the society (2010:74). According to him, local knowledge which is not only a common knowledge, but is also a process which spreads and includes local people as well as things and places, gives priorities to the local people (2010:80).

Besides the above written, a connection to place may be created not through material objects but through the line of ancestors. Langton (2002) describes a problem of the inhabitants of Cape York Peninsula (Queensland, Australia) who claim that they are owners of Lakefield and Cliff Island National Parks. They do not have material objects created there, but according to their beliefs the souls of their ancestors still inhabit those places. According to these people a place may be marked not by the material objects but by the souls. Thus, for them "both the sense of place and rights to place are marked by the ancestral connections" (Langton 2002:255). The case of IDPs is similar to what Langton describes. For them the souls also have features of materiality and are attached to the grave, they give the meaning and significance to the place where the graves are located as well.

Williams (2003) also underscores the importance of ancestors in creating the relation to land. According to him, the first generations of gypsies who arrived in France decided to settle there because the living environment was good, as it was easy to get food and water there. However, for the younger generation the place is important because their ancestors

are buried there (Williams, 2003:2-3). Thus, this is an example how a connection to land can be created through the deceased.

To sum up, there is a firm connection between the dead and their symbolic representation. Symbolic representations of the deceased play an important role in sustaining memory about them and may create connections to a certain place. The case with Georgian IDPs will illustrate how the memory about the deceased is sustained when the symbolic representations of dead such as graves and the place to which they belonged cannot be accessed due to external factors.

## Chapter 2: IDPs from South Ossetia

On 8<sup>th</sup> August, 2008 with the first military attack on the villages in South Ossetia the so called 5-day Georgian-Russian war began. Due to the conflict thousands of local people had to flee from their villages and move to other parts of Georgia, mainly to Gori, the closest largest city on the Georgian territory and to Tbilisi, the capital.

South Ossetia is located in the northern part of Georgia and shares a border with the Russian federation. According to the Georgian government it belongs to the Shida Kartli Region and is called Tskhinvali district (See the attachment #2). The conflict over the territory between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia began in the 1990s. The first major conflict happened in 1991-1992 following the decision of Georgian president Gamsaxurdia to abolish the autonomous status of South Ossetia (Gamisonia and pertaia 2009). The conflict was followed by the first flow of IDPs from the region. According to the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation of Georgia (MRA) there were 251 000 IDPs from Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region<sup>1</sup>. The second tension arose in 2004 with the new government of Georgia and their politics towards the region. The tension reached its culmination in 2008, when the war broke out and additionally 26 000 people had to flee from their homes (Gamisonia and Pertaia 2009).

The IDPs have a special legal status in Georgia. According to the Georgian law, IDPs are people who were obliged to leave their homes due to the threat to their lives or the lives of their family members. In order to get a special certificate for IDPs, they have to register at the MRA of Georgia, which will decide to provide the person with the status of IDP or not. When receiving the IDP status, people have couple of benefits. For example, they receive

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<sup>1</sup> <http://mra.gov.ge/main/ENG#section/33>



monthly financial support from the Georgian Government, they do not pay the utility payments and are allowed to receive a flat in the IDP settlement.

The settlements were built in various parts of Georgia. They were meant to solve the housing problems of IDPs, who after the conflict stayed at their relatives' flats or found shelters in public schools and kindergartens. Thus, the government built cottages or renovated old military settlements in various parts of Georgia. According to the Transparency International Georgia (2010), 13 settlements were built between October and December 2008.

One of the IDP settlements is located in the village Koda. Koda belongs to Tetrtskhara district in Kvemo Kartli region and is a 40 minute drive from Tbilisi. According to the MRA of Georgia, nowadays there are around 1600 IDPs in Koda<sup>2</sup>. Most of the IDPs are from the Liakhvi Gorge. The settlement is located just next to the village. As one of my informants told me, the place used to be a military settlement during the Soviet Union. After the 2008 August conflict, the ruined buildings were renovated so that the IDPs could use them as flats. All in all, there are ten 5-storey buildings with three flats on each floor (see appendix # 3, photos #1,2). The flats vary in sizes (smallest with only one and the largest with three bedrooms) and were distributed according to the number of family members. The IDPs were provided with a small fridge, a cupboard, a kitchen table and chairs, beds, a wardrobe and a TV set.

The IDPs in Koda are more or less integrated with the local people. As the village and the settlement are located close to each other, there are quite a few places where the locals and IDPs intersect: they use the same police and ambulance centers, attend services at the same church, children go to the same school. However, the difference with the locals is emphasized constantly. The IDPs always stress that their traditions vary from those that the locals

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<sup>2</sup> <http://mra.gov.ge/main/ENG#section/50>

practice. Differences are even among IDPs, as they are from different villages. People feel closeness to those from their own villages.

The social ties become mostly visible during the rituals and burials can serve as an example. When a person dies in the settlement, the closest neighbors which are mainly, the people living in the same building have to help the family of the deceased person. The neighbors who cook instead of the family members of the deceased prepare meal for them as well as for the final dinner - *Kharji*. The neighbors also used to help the family members of the deceased in digging the grave and burying the person. However, in Koda this is already a responsibility of the undertaking. Besides the neighbors and the undertaking, the church has a significant role in burial process as well. After a person dies, the priest has to go to the house of the family and read special prayers. However, the priest does not live in Koda, which sometimes creates inconveniences. Finally, as *Kharji* involves sometimes more than 200 persons, a special “house of rituals” has been constructed in the settlement, which can be used by every IDP.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

The thesis is based on ethnographic research done in Koda IDP settlement, Kvemo Kartli region in April 2013. During the research, I would travel to the settlement every morning, spend time among the IDPs and interview them. Doing ethnography gave me an opportunity not to focus only on the particular research problem detached from other social problems, but to have a broader picture of the life of the IDPs at a new settlement. This way I could discuss the problem of the lack of access to graves, in relation to the social reality of IDPs. Taking the case of IDPs gave me an opportunity to find the answer to my research question and see what happened to the memories of ancestors and the attachment to the place, when the material objects were lost.

Throughout the research I did 12 interviews with the IDPs, 6 of which were individual, semi-structured ones, and another six were more informal group interviews (conversations). While the individual interviews with particular respondents gave me an opportunity to touch upon some very personal and sensitive topics, the group interviews were very successful as they resembled very much an everyday conversations of people. My respondents would soon forget about me and start debating about the death-related issues, discussed various examples and shared their ideas about them. Throughout the interviews I used an interview guide (see the attachment # 1). However, in certain cases, especially in group conversations, I could not follow it.

Finding respondents for the interviews was rather easy for me as I had acquaintances among the IDPs. I knew Manana (female, 56) before my fieldwork, thus I asked her for help before going there. Being a very active person, Manana knows most of the IDPs in the settlement. She introduced me to various people. This was a great help for me, because as people knew I was together with her, they accepted me as a guest rather than as a stranger. Besides, as the

settlement is more or less separate from other parts of the village and everybody knows each other, after half a day of my being there, everybody knew that a ‘new’ person was around. Thus, they were interested who I was what and I was doing there. Generally speaking, most of the informants were very talkative and seemed to be glad to share their personal stories and their knowledge of the death-related customs in their region. The only problem was that they expected me to know all the traditions and got a little bit angry when I was asking questions, answers to which should have been obvious for me as a Georgian person.

Besides the interviews, participation in the various activities of the people were also very informative. Throughout the day I would walk around the settlement taking photos and when I would see a group of people I approached them, joined and started a conversation about their problems after the conflict and about the problem of the “lost” graves. Being invited in one of the informants’ house I had an opportunity to see how they live, how their houses look like. Finally, I attended a funeral of an old lady. During the funeral I had an opportunity to ask questions about the rituals. This gave me a possibility to see how the burials were actually practiced among IDPs and what the meanings of the death-related activities were.

## **Chapter 4: Commemoration of the Deceased and Attachment to Place among IDPs**

After the 2008 August war internally displaced people from South Ossetia found themselves in various settlements built or renovated specially for them. The flats, the furniture and humanitarian aids were provided for them. It seemed that they were safe now, away from war and violence which continued for almost 20 years in South Ossetia. However, the safety does not seem to have much importance for them, as they lost the places where they belonged. In the following sections I will describe the importance of ancestors and their graves for IDPs. Firstly, I will argue that the graves are crucial in sustaining memory and keeping connection with the ancestors for IDPs. In the second section I will illustrate that when the access with the graves is prohibited, the memory is kept through verbal commemoration. The third section will show that even though the memory about the deceased is sustained in verbal speech, the connection with the dead, which was part of IDPs' culture, is lost, because the unity with the deceased was created through graves and the soil. In the last section I will discuss the ways how IDPs try to re-unite with the deceased at new place.

### **4.1 Importance of Graves**

My respondents believe that every Christian must have a grave. Arguing against cremation they claim that God created every person out of soil, thus after death they have to return to their initial condition and reunite with the ground. Graves are their future conditions, graves are what they will become after their body stops existing. The graves of their ancestors, is what is left from them in this world. Consequently visiting the graves of the relatives is one of the important aspects of the practices connected with the deceased in Georgian culture.

According to the informants, there are special days when they usually go to the graves. When a person dies, his grave has to be visited on the second day of burial, on the 9<sup>th</sup> and on the 40<sup>th</sup> days after the death. These days are connected to the Orthodox Christian discourse, according

to which the soul needs 40 days until the Lord will judge them and decide where they should go to heaven or to hell. During these 40 days the soul approaches God and on 9<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> days as soul encounters the most difficult crucibles, thus it needs special care and prayer from the living ones (interview with the church representative<sup>3</sup>). Furthermore, one's grave is visited after a year of their death. It is believed that the grief should last for one year and the end of grief is celebrated (Chikovani, 1987). The graves of the deceased are visited annually on their birthdays as well. Besides, after one year of a person's death, she joins the group of other deceased and is visited on the various religious celebrations such as: Easter, St. Mary's Day and the Ascension of Christ.

The most important celebration seems to be Easter. Either on Easter Sunday or on the following Monday people go to the graves. It is important to bring red eggs (specially colored for Easter) and Easter cake in order to congratulate the deceased and celebrate the day together with them. My respondent, 50-year-old Maka (female) says they have to inform the dead that Easter has come, so that the deceased can celebrate the day as well. She says that Easter is for everybody: for those who are alive and for those who are dead. It seems that a connection between life and death is felt very strongly on Easter because of Christ's resurrection. The holiday is celebrated with the deceased. The mood is rather cheerful and there is even a game of 'rolling eggs' on the graves. With delight Nikolozi (male, 75) tells a story how they would roll the red eggs on the graves of the deceased and make a competition whose egg would roll further: "we were calling it 'rolling.' A winner was the one who would roll an egg the furthest."

In their old villages my respondents used to not only visit the graves on celebrations, but also take care of them. Murman (male, 48), told me that in his previous village, the graves of his

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<sup>3</sup> Interview was done with one of the priests from Tbilisi

ancestors were very close to his house. Thus, very often he would go to the graves and clean them: “I took care of the graves of my ancestors. I even knew the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of my ancestors. All of their graves were cleaned... Ancestors were respected there...” Having a clean grave of a dead family member is important for other respondents as well. For some of them it seems that taking care of the graves is similar to taking care of an old family member: “the deceased deserve to have a clean grave” Nona (female, 40) told me. When a grave is cleaned, it means that the person buried there is still remembered. The longer the relatives are remembered the better. According to Murman (male, 48), “time does not matter,” all ancestors, despite when they lived, have to be remembered. It is a duty of elderly people to tell the youth where their ancestors were buried and where their graves were located.

Visiting graves is firmly connected with religious identity of my respondents. When I would ask why they visited the graves of ancestors, they answered that they are Orthodox Christians and thus it is their duty to visit graves. They felt quite insulted with this question. They could not imagine that graves may not be important for somebody. And as I was a Georgian, I should have known the importance of graves. Visiting graves indeed goes very well with the Orthodox Christian discourse. According to the representatives of the church, the graves of Orthodox Christians are significant and serve two main aims. Firstly it informs other Orthodox people that a person of a same religious belief is buried at that place and secondly, it keeps a memory of that person to the next generations (Bishop Pavle, 1998).

My respondents have learnt about the importance of visiting the graves from their ancestors. Their grandparents used to visit the graves of their relatives, which for my respondents means that they have to do the same: “We have this in our blood” says Jansugh (male, 82). The fact that their ancestors had the same ritual is a very strong argument for them to continue the same activity.

Whenever the graves are visited, one takes candles, food and wine with them. They lit candles for the souls of the deceased as a symbol of eternal light. The food is for grave-visitors as well as for the deceased. The food dedicated for a deceased is located on the grave. There is no doubt that people are aware that the deceased will not really eat the food, however, they say that the food will be delivered (*miuva*) to the dead relative. “We bring there the food which the deceased loved and say ‘let this food reach you.’ Physically they do not eat it but the deceased knows that we care for them” (Nargiza, female, 69). Wine is more important than food, because the visitors of the grave have to say a special toast for the deceased called *shendoba*. With this toast living people ask the God to save the soul of the deceased and “keep these souls in the light.” Telling the deceased *shendoba* is crucial and is considered as a duty of living relatives: “We have to tell them *shendoba*, it cannot go otherwise” told me 34-year-old Giorgi. On the grave of a person people firstly drink a toast for that particular deceased one, but then the toast is told for other dead family members or friends as well. Jano (male, 19) told me: “We say it so: by remembering this and this person, let other deceased be remembered.”

Graves are considered to be the houses for the deceased. Thus visiting the grave means visiting a deceased relative. In her interview Manana (female, 56) told me: “When I used to go there, I had a feeling that I would enter his world, his house... [The deceased] need to have a place somewhere, so that we could visit them. Otherwise, they will be lost.” Williams writes about a similar issue. According to him for Manus, Gypsies from central France, the graves of their deceased is similar to the houses of their relatives and are visited frequently by the living ones (Williams, 2003).

The grave itself is also created in a way that the deceased could easily “receive guests.” Usually a table and a bench/chair is constructed near the grave so that people can go there



and sit and have some food and drink. In her interview, Nona described how they would construct graves in their previous villages: “We used to make an iron fence around the grave, so that dogs or other animals could not go inside and spoil it. We would cover the ground across the fence with red soil... Beautifully... And we would put table and benches, so that on holidays, when we would visit graves we could sit there like normal people.” It is important to mention that in other parts of Georgia one can find a real room around the grave. In those cases the grave is not a symbolic representation, but is a real house. Of course my respondents have acknowledged that the deceased people are gone and that they do not really visit them, however, they say that visiting the grave is very helpful for them as at the graves they feel closer to the deceased: “We go there... as if our deceased is together with us... We just calm ourselves” says Manana (56). Astuti, when she writes about the perception of the deceased in Madagascar, argues that on the one hand people know that “when one is dead, one is dead,” however at the same time the dead continues to be alive for them (1995).

Besides being a house for the deceased, the graves represent a dead person. Hallam and Hockey (2001) argue that after a person dies, people create a symbolic representation of the deceased as a substitute for the one who has disappeared from sight. Nona’s case can serve as an example here. Nona has two dead children. Her eldest daughter died at the age of 1, and her son died when he was only 15 days old. Both of the children were buried at the cemetery in the village Frisi, where her father-in-law was buried. In that part of Georgia it is believed that if a child dies at a very young age, they have to be buried in the grandparent’s grave, because the other deceased will not accept them (Chikovani 1987). In 2004 when the political situation and relations with Ossetians became worse, they had to leave their village and to move to Nona’s parents’ house, located in a neighboring village Eredvi, 6km away. Since then she could not visit the graves of her children. After moving to Eredvi Nona’s husband made a marble gravestone where they put the names of their deceased children.

They wanted to bring the stone to the grave but the Ossetians did not let them do so. Thus, they kept the stone at home and planned to take it to the grave when the situation would settle. After the 2008 August conflict, they had to leave the grave stone behind. At the end of August, after the war, Nona's brother-in-law managed to go to their village Eredvi and wanted to bring the gravestone to Nona and her husband. However, the gravestone was stolen. Nona said that she was very angry and at the same time very sad. She added that she would never forgive [Ossetians] for this. I asked why this gravestone was so important for her. She looked at me with astonishment: "Why are you asking this? They were my children. The [Gravestone] is what was left... what else could have been left from them? I have lost photos... everything... That gravestone was my only hope..." This case illustrates how a material object can symbolically transfer into a person.

Other material objects related to the deceased are very important as well, however, like Nona most of the IDPs did not manage to bring with them other material objects related to the deceased: No photos, no letters, no other objects that would belong to the deceased. Keeping photos of a deceased person at home on the wall, at a visible place, is a common practice among the people from the South Ossetia region. After a person is dead his or her photo is enlarged and is hung on the wall for quite a long time (sometimes for 10-15 years). Gillis writes about the importance of photos and argues that they "form cultural representations which ensure that dead remain socially active, that is, as a continued presence within the social and imaginative life of families" (quoted in Hallam, Hockey, Howarth 1999:29). Besides the photos, people used to keep other material objects as well. For example Murman kept a dagger which belonged to his grandfather. Manana kept her husband's clothes: "for more than one year after his death. I had a corner dedicated for my husband... I kept his clothes, letters, everything there. Even now I have my husband's corner – his photo and I lit a candle of him on the day of the dead."

The importance of visiting graves and keeping material objects related to them illustrate that it is important to keep a memory about the deceased relatives. However, why is it so important to keep a memory, why is it important to keep the dead as part of everyday life? In order to answer this question, below I refer to ethnological research, Orthodox Christian discourse and my respondents' answers.

Ethnological studies done in this field, search for the answers in the pre-Christian beliefs. Surguladze (2003) argues that according to pre-Christian beliefs there was a connection among the souls of deceased and the activities of people. The souls had the power to influence the processes going on in this world. For example it was believed that the souls would accompany people while they were working in the field and if they wanted to have a good harvest, they had to keep a good relation with the deceased (Surguladze 2003).

In Christian discourse the connection with agricultural activities more or less disappeared, however the importance of remembering the deceased is encouraged. Binski argues that Christianity lessened the gap between death and life (quoted in Hallam, Hockey, Howarth 1999:24). It is believed that living people should pray for the deceased. With their prayer the living help the deceased to go to heaven if they are in hell. As for the souls who are already in heaven, if the living ones pray for them, they send blessings to them<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the idea of being assisted from the deceased is kept in Christian discourse.

According to my respondents the deceased are important because they are Christians and this is their tradition and consequently their duty. However, besides the religious beliefs and traditions, there is one more important reason to commemorate the ancestors. The respondents say that if they do not remember their ancestors, their grandchildren will not remember them and their graves will not be visited: "When we die, our children will also

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<sup>4</sup> The above information is based on an interview with a priest.

know that it is important to visit our graves and to lit a candle for us. We take our children and grandchildren to the graves so that they could see how everything is done there” said Maka (female, 50). Thus, by visiting the grave of a grandfather, one ensures that his grave will be visited. This created the continuity between the generations and helps the traditions to be sustained in the future.

Thus, visiting the graves not only sustains the memory about the deceased but also ensures that the living ones, themselves will be remembered in the future by the following generations. The fear of death seems to play an important role here. Writing about the universality of a fear of death, Becker (1973) argues that fear of death is the most important drive of people. Malinowski ([1925] 1954) argues against the idea of universality of death and claims that it is contradicted by the universal denial of death. He names religion as an example of the denial of death.

Hallam, Hockey and Howarth introduced a term of “social death,” which does not coincide with natural death and “may occur before, at or after biological death” (1999:123). According to the authors social death depends upon how long a deceased person will be remembered and how long they will play an active role in the lives of living people (Hallam, Hockey and Howarth 1999:123). Thus, if the biological death is inevitable, people may attempt to prolong their social lives and visiting graves can be one of the ways for it.

“Social immortality” of a person is also related to the traditions and the identity of the whole group. As Nona (female 40) told me, when a person is remembered, people also remember the traditions that he would follow. Traditions are the source for the identity of IDPs, thus keeping them also strengthens their group identity.

However, the IDPs do not have an access to the graves, thus the question is how the memory and a possibility of ‘social immortality’ is sustained when people have no access to the

graves? The following section will illustrate that verbal commemoration comes as a substitute to visiting the graves and that through toasting the memory as well as the possibility of social immortality is maintained.

## 4.2 Verbal Commemoration of the Deceased

After the displacement the IDPs lost access to the graves,, however the deceased seem to follow the community through verbal commemoration: everyday conversations, discussing the dreams and toasting. First of all, the deceased are mentioned in everyday speeches and are part of everyday life: “Each and every day I think about my children. Every child whose name is Elene reminds me of my daughter and every Nika reminds me of my son” (Nona, 40).

Furthermore, the connection is kept through dreams. Dreams are considered to be one of the main ways for keeping connection with the dead (Khutishvili, 2009). Dreams are indeed very important for IDPs and they discuss them with their relatives. Shorena (female, 72) told me that she was going to have a surgery. The night before the surgery she saw her dead mother and sisters in her dream. They were putting white beans in a bag for her. Shorena first got afraid and thought that she would die, but her neighbor calmed her and said that they granted her with the years of life. Indeed the surgery went very well. “My deceased did a great job for me then” told me Shorena.

Besides the above mentioned, the deceased are remembered every time people get together and have wine. There seems to be a firm connection between the commemoration of a deceased and Georgian *Sufra* (*Sufra* can be translated as a special dinner, which usually includes not only family members but also guests). Firstly, when a person dies, the issue of the final dinner for the deceased called *Kharji*, is significant. Some respondents even say that sometimes *Kharji* becomes more important than the deceased themselves. Secondly,

whenever one visits the graves they have to take food there for the deceased and make a small *sufra*. Furthermore, every day which is dedicated to the commemoration of the dead, is celebrated with dinner: “On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of a person’s death, a chicken is cooked and we make a *sufra* for the deceased” (Daviti, Male, 74). Finally, every time a couple of friends or relatives get together and have dinner, they commemorate their deceased. “We talk about them whenever we have guests. We say toast for them” (Manana 56). The second toast during the *sufra* is always dedicated to the dead relatives.

*Sufras* and toasting are an important part of Georgian culture. As Georgian ethnographer Gotsiridze puts it (2007), in the phenomenon of the sGeorgian *sufra*, one can find a religious and a social worldview which people hold. According to him, dinner had some sacred meaning for Georgians, which, to some extent is still kept. Having dinners together is the most frequent way of socializing between people. Thus, by toasting for the dead, the deceased become the part of an important ‘ritual’ which unites people.

In this case oral commemoration may have more significance than the material objects related to deceased and the memory is sustained via communication between the people (Assmann 2006). Due to the cultural specificity (importance of *sufras* and toasting) the memory about the deceased is kept successfully even without the material culture. Consequently the possibility to create the capital for social immortality is still there. However, if both (memory and possibility of social immortality) are still kept, why than the graves are still important? In the following section I will argue that the importance of graves is related to the importance of the place where they are located. The place is crucial, as it is believed that the souls of the deceased remain attached to the place of burial.

### 4.3 Importance of soil

Besides the perception, that the grave is a house for the deceased or represents them, there is another reason why graves are important. My respondents believe that the soul of a person stays at the place where they are buried: a soul is attached to the grave. On the one hand, they say that the soul remains on the earth after a person's death for 40 days, but after that goes to the heaven as it is taught by the Orthodox Church. However, the following examples show that ideas of souls are not that simple: Abesalom was worried that his father was buried in their village, while her mother was buried 'here,' in Koda: "They say people meet each other after death... [Now as they are buried apart] how will they meet each other?" he asked with sorrow and suspicion. Davit, who knew his father very well, was not that worried about the fact: "His father used to be such a naughty man, he would have found his wife even if she were buried in Armenia" he said joking. Even in this joke one can see that for the respondent the soul remains there where a person is buried and continues to exist in the same way as he used to be in 'this world'.

Manana's (female, 54) case can serve as another example. She was telling me that people from her village Disevi used to visit graves on Easter, but recently they started visiting graves on the second day of Easter. When I asked why, she replied: "I don't know but, they say that souls also celebrate Easter. So when you go to the grave they are not there, they are celebrating it elsewhere, but are they really away?" she asked smiling.

A place of burial is essential and people should be buried in their villages. Manana (female, 56) told me that it is desirable to bury a person in the village where they were born: "It is desirable to bury a person at her own place, her village, her land/soil... Whenever I see my husband in my dreams, I always see him in his village..." for Manana, as all my other respondents dreams are importance source of information and for her this dream means that

her husband's soul remains close to his village. Sometimes such an attitude creates dilemmas. I have heard a woman telling another that she managed to bury her mother in South Ossetia. She was happy that her mother was on the land where she belongs, but on the other hand she could not visit her now.

The importance of place comes from the belief that humans were created from the soil: "God created Adam and Eva from soil" (Gela, male, 60). On the other hand, this is what they are going to become in the future. It is their future condition – through burial and grave they reunite with soil: "we will also end up in graves right?" (Manana, 56). The particular soil at their place is what they were created from and what they are going to be in the future. This attitude creates a special attachment to the place where they were born. "The processes of transformation are going on inside the land. This is why one must not lose the territory. Neighbor's territory is neighbor's territory, and yours is yours. The future has to continue, right?" (Gela, male, 60). Through the soil IDPs keep the connection and the continuity with the past and the present. The descendants come from the soil, the ancestors transform to soil after death. The person his ancestors and descendants seem to be parts of the same constantly renewed entity.

The above written understanding of soil creates a special attitude to place. Various authors (David and Willson 2002, Hornstein 2011) argue that place gains meaning through the material culture, architecture, or other objects created by the people. However, the case of IDPs show, that the place/soil is important as it itself becomes a material representation of the dead and is a source of unity between the dead and the living.

The unity and continuity with the deceased which was created through place and soil cannot be maintained after the resettlement. The souls of the deceased were left behind in the previous places whereas the living ones had to move to new place. Verbal commemoration



keeps the deceased in the memory of people but the cyclical reunion of the community is lost. By displacement their “unity” has collapsed and IDPs lost their ties with their ancestors. The next section will show how IDPs attempt to re-create the connection with the ancestors.

#### 4. 4 A New Place with New graves

A new place brought new challenges for IDPs. Together with other issues, such as flat, furniture, employment, problems of activities, IDPs had to solve the problem of the dead: where to bury them? Where to build a new house for them? A new cemetery was created in Koda for IDPs. Right next to the cemetery, which was dedicated to the Koda settlers, the government gave a place to the IDPs (See appendix #3, photos # 2-3). As the cemeteries are next to each other and there is no strict separation between the two, the locals and IDPs seem to have equal rights in relation to the cemeteries. The cemetery is about 30 minutes of walking from the settlement. Around 40 graves of IDPs are spread in the open space on the hill with a beautiful view over the chain of mountains and a lake. Graves are frequently visited by the family members. On these new graves IDPs have a chance to say *shendoba* even to those dead relatives who are not buried there. As they cannot reach the graves of their ancestors, they toast for them at the new ones.

However, this place is not considered to be a ‘proper’ place to bury a deceased. In order to keep a connection with their previous land and in order to bury people in the soil “where they belonged” IDPs try to bury their relatives nearby Gori. Gori is the largest closest city to South Ossetia and quite a few IDPs have relatives there. By burying a person nearby Gori, they bring the body of the deceased closer to the place where they were born. However, it is also important to mention that some people bury their deceased in regions where their mothers come from: IDPs are from the South Ossetia region, but their mothers sometimes come from other regions, and were married in South Ossetia. Thus, they prefer to bury the dead there.

Furthermore, Manana told me that several people managed to go to South Ossetia and brought some soil and spread it over the graves so that the deceased people had the soil from their village. This is what happened on the funeral which I have attended. When 84 year-old Darejani died, her son and daughter-in-law buried her at Koda cemetery according to “burial rules.” Firstly *panashvidi* was organized. During *Panashvidi* the body of a person in a coffin is located in the middle of a living room. The chairs are placed along the walls, around the coffin. Family members and close relatives sit on the chairs and newcomers go around the coffin and meet all family members and bring condolences. Champagne, water, fruits and a candle are located in the room for the deceased. This is an important aspect of the ritual. A candle has to be lit until a person is buried. A cup of water may even be kept for 40 days (as it is believed that the soul is still there). During *panashvidi* people usually communicate with each other. Thus, I had an opportunity to talk to one of the relatives. She told me that it was very difficult for Darejan to get used to the new environment, but now she had to be buried there. Another woman replied with the Georgian expression, which can be translated as: ‘a poor woman, she has to be buried here, but she was from a totally different place.’ After three days Darejan was buried. Cars and minibuses were there to take everybody to the cemetery. At the cemetery when the coffin was placed in the ground, Darejan’s son brought a small fabric bag and spread soil over the grave. This was soil from South Ossetia, from the place where Darejan “belonged to.”

However, not everybody manages to get the soil from Ossetia because the borders are closed and it is very difficult to get there. Thus, certain people are buried without it. In the beginning I was amazed that they do not feel worried about this fact. But then I realized that they are not worried, because Koda settlement for them and the cemeteries for their deceased are just temporal places of residence. Even though the IDPs are aware of the difficult political situation, their hope of returning back is very strong.

The idea of returning back firstly is because people have practical problems. Due to the different natural and urban environment IDPs cannot construct their everyday life as they used to do in their villages. It is extremely difficult for them to ‘start a new life,’ as they have no possibility to work in the same way as they used to. In South Ossetia the soil as well as the climate was very good for the cultivation of the land. Thus, most of the IDPs had economy with fruit trees and grain. Cultivation was their main activity which they cannot continue in Koda, as the soil is not good enough. The lands which were granted to IDPs are located too far away and they cannot reach them. Besides, due to the lack of water, plants do not survive during summer time: “We do not have water here. Nothing can be done without water...” (Gela, male, 60).

Besides, the problems of land, the places of residence are totally different from what they were used to. In their villages, IDPs had two-storey houses with huge gardens. Surely nobody is used to living in a flat-like apartment after having private houses: “If I wanted to live in a flat I would have married in Tbilisi [capital city]” – said 31-year old Marina, half joking but with anger. Saying this she was carrying a huge pot with dough from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor to *Tone*. *Tone* is a special place where women bake bread. IDPs used to have tones in their gardens close to kitchen. In the IDP settlement, *Tones* are located at the end of each block house, thus it is difficult to reach them with a heavy pot. The problems that Marina and other respondents face illustrates that the living environment is not convenient for them to do the same activities as they used to do before.

Besides the above written, they have experience of leaving their villages and later returning. The conflict in South Ossetia started in 1990s. People lived in ‘constant war.’ “If we could not hear gun-shots we would start asking is everything alright with [the military]?” (Lali, female, 72). However, there were periods when the conflict escalated, for example in 2004

and people had to leave their villages for a couple of days. Nona (female, 40) said that she had to take her children to Bakurian for couple of days because of the difficult situation. But they would always come back. In 2008 they had to leave their villages because of the bombing. Nobody would have left the villages, if there was no bombing, because as mentioned above they were used to constant war. They did not take the situation seriously. They were sure that in a couple of days, they would return back. Nobody expected that they would have to leave villages for good. They do not believe in this even now.

Gela (male, 60) is among those who strongly believe that sooner or later they will return to their previous houses: “Rumors are spread that we will be returned to our homes. People say that 1 million dollars are dedicated for IDPs. They will build new houses for us, with gas and electricity and everything...” When this happens, and IDPs will be able to return to their villages, they plan to take the graves of their deceased with them: “Who will leave their deceased here?! Nobody!” (Nona, 40).

To sum up, the results show that the graves of the relatives are crucial for the IDPs not only in keeping the memories about the deceased and also creating the possibility for social immortality. When it is impossible to visit the graves the practices of commemoration are kept through oral memory, which due to cultural specificities are as strong as keeping memory in material culture. However, with the loss of the graves people lose their direct connection with the deceased, as it is believed that the souls of the dead people stay attached to the graves and soil gives a possibility of unity of the dead and the living ones. Bringing the soil from South Ossetia or burying the deceased nearer to Gori, are the attempts of people to re-create the unity. However if they do not succeed, they do not worry much, they believe that they soon will return to South Ossetia.

## Conclusions

Taking into consideration the importance of the material culture on the one hand, in sustaining the memory and on the other hand, in building ties to the place, it is important to illustrate how the memory is kept when the access to material objects as well as to the place is banned. In the thesis I analyzed the case of IDPs from South Ossetia who had to leave all their material belongings behind due to the military conflict. The thesis shows how the memory of the ancestors is sustained, when IDPs cannot visit the graves and how this influences the attachment that people had to their places.

The research highlights the importance of visiting graves for the IDPs and illustrates that the graves represent the deceased themselves. Graves are visited annually on various celebrations and the ancestors are commemorated there. However, the lack of the access to the graves does not affect the memory about the deceased because the commemoration happens constantly through toasting during dinners and *sufra*s. This makes the deceased part of the social life of the living ones.

Another function that the graves imply is giving the living ones a possibility to assure that they will be remembered in the future. As the living ones keep the deceased as part of their lives, they themselves want to be kept socially alive by their descendents after their death. Thus, they visit the graves of their ancestors and teach their children and grandchildren to do the same. However, when the graves cannot be visited, the possibility of immortality comes under threat. Toasting is a substitute in this case as well and serves the same symbolic meaning as visiting graves.

The rupture with graves disturbs the unity between the dead and the living ones. The interviews show that according to the respondents, the souls are attached to the place where

they were buried. Thus, after the displacement the souls of the deceased stayed in South Ossetia, while the living ones moved to the new places. Furthermore, people should be buried at the places where they were born, because through burials people re-unite with the soil from which they are believed to be created. Displacement creates a discontinuity with the past, present and future generations, which was possible through the place of burial. The interviews illustrated that there is a belief that a person is created from soil and after death turns back to it. Such an attitude towards the soil creates a special attachment to the place of birth for IDPs. There are attempts to recreate the unity with the deceased by bringing the soil from South Ossetia or burying the dead near the region. However, in case of failure, IDPs do not worry much as they hope that sooner or later they will go back to their villages and the unity will be recreated.

Thus the material representations of dead, verbal commemoration, memory and place intersect each other constantly. In case of the lack of material objects verbal commemoration ensures that the memory of the deceased will be sustained. Memory creates the sense of immortality of a person and the continuity between the generations. The places play significant role in creating the unity between the dead and the living and it is a way to unite with the deceased. On the other hand, the place/soil gains its importance through the souls of deceased and itself becomes a representation of the dead.

The research shows that IDPs have a very strong attachment to their villages. However it is important to mention that my research is limited only to one particular settlement of IDPs, while the results may vary in other settlements. In the case of IDPs from 2008-August conflict it has been only 5 years that they left their villages, thus the memory of the deceased as well as their attachment to their places/villages is still strong. The further research could focus on the memory and place-making among the IDPs from 1990s. As they have been

displaced more than 20 years ago, the integration to the new places might be stronger, thus it would be interesting to see how do they solve the problem of the lack of material objects representing their dead relatives and how this influences their memory and an attachment to the place.

To sum up, even though there is no access to the material objects representing the dead, the memory about the deceased is still kept through verbal commemoration. What is more, the practices of verbal commemoration give the living ones the possibility to create the basis for their social immortality. As for the place, IDPs still feel a very strong belonging to their previous villages, as they believe that they were created from that soil and have to reunite with it after the death. Further research could be done on the memory and place-making among IDPs with a longer period of displacement.

## Appendix #1

Interview guide:

Personal information.

Name, age, occupation, their story about fleeing from South Ossetia.

Everyday life in their villages in South Ossetia

Activities; job; family, friends.

Everyday life in Koda IDP settlement

Activities; job; family, friends.

Burial rituals.

Description of the rituals. How they are held? How were they held in their previous villages?

Graves.

When do they visit graves?

Why do they visit graves?

What do they do there?

What happens when they cannot visit graves?

How do they feel about it?

Importance of deceased.

When are the deceased commemorated?

How are they commemorated?

Material Objects representing the deceased.

Did they keep material objects representing the dead?

What were these objects?

Why did they keep them?

Did they manage to bring those objects from South Ossetia?

If yes, what?

If not, how do they feel about it? What do they do now?



## Appendix # 2

Map of South Ossetia



## Appendix # 3

### Photos

#1. A block from IDP settlement in Koda



# 2. New graves for IDPs in Koda



# 3. A Table and benches next to the grave



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