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PLACE ATTACHMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE BOVEC REGION

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a case study of attachment to place of origin of the people who after the WWII emigrated from alpine valleys of the Bovec region to the central town of Bovec. The issues standing out are the intertwinement and interrelation of different aspects of the place attachment: functional, genealogical, symbolic, emotional, and others. The differences in attachment to the place of origin are on one hand conditioned by individual life histories and family situations, but on the other hand they also depend on actor's social roles, culturally mediated spatial representations, cultural norms and values. In the experience of the place attachment there are indivisibly intertwined feelings of attachment to place as a locus of social relations, to place as a "signifier" of specific cultural meanings and to space/place (as a "natural" environment) itself. Place attachment is a unique and indivisible experience of space, i.e. of place as a phenomenon of the social spatiality.

Keywords: place attachment, spatial experience, spatial representations, migrations, life histories, the Bovec region

ATTACAMENTO AL TERRITORIO: UNO STUDIO SULL'ESEMPIO DELLA REGIONE DI BOVEC

SINTESI

L'articolo presenta uno studio relativo all'attaccamento al luogo d'origine, partendo dall'esempio degli emigranti che nel secondo dopoguerra si trasferirono a Bovec dalle vicine vallate alpine. Al centro dello studio l'intreccio e l'interdipendenza dei vari aspetti di attaccamento al territorio: funzionali, genealogici, emozionali, simbolici, ecc. E' dimostrato che le differenze sono condizionate dalle vicende individuali e dalle situazioni familiari, ma che, al tempo stesso, dipendono anche dai soggetti sociali, dalle rappresentazioni ambientali mediate dalla cultura, da norme e valori culturali. L'esperienza di attaccamento al territorio comprende tre sentimenti collegati in maniera indivisibile: l'attaccamento alla località come locus dei rapporti sociali, alla località come veicolo di determinati significati e all'ambiente (naturale) in quanto tale. L'attaccamento al territorio è un modo unico ed indissolubile di vivere l'ambiente, cioè del luogo, come un fenomeno dello spazio sociale.

Parole chiave: attaccamento al territorio, esperienza ambientale, rappresentazione ambientale, migrazioni, vicende individuali, regione di Bovec

"To be human is to live in a world that is filled
with significant places"
(Relph, 1976, 1)

PLACE ATTACHMENT AS A PHENOMENON OF THE "SOCIAL SPATIALITY"

It might seem paradoxical that social sciences have been taking intensified interest in empirical studies and especially theoretical reflections of different phenomena of the people-space relationships almost simultaneously with the growth of debates on the so-called general "deterritorialization" of the human social being.¹ But the paradox is only apparent. Namely, one of the most relevant epistemological conclusions derived from numerous discussions on globalization (vs. localization), hyperspaces, mobility, communicational revolution, homelessness, placelessness, non-places etc., as the results of a "postmodern" way of living and acting, is not only the recognition that the deterministic role of space in contemporary societies has to be relativized. On the contrary, the opinion that has prevailed is that some of the implicitly established spatial assumptions of diverse humanistic, also anthropological researches should be questioned and, if necessary, revalorized.² Expressed in another terms: it was not until drastic changes in the relations among people, community, and space have occurred – some of this relations have till then appeared almost as natural and taken for granted – that the conviction that space and place can never be simply "given", but that they are always the result of continuous social production of space, finally prevailed. From this perspective we can agree with Gupta and Ferguson (1997, 47) stating that "questions of space and place are, in this deterritorialized age, more central to anthropological representation than ever".

Among the topics that have attracted many investigations into the people-space relations in the last decades of the 20th century, have been certainly the phenomena of migrants, refugees, displaced and stateless

people, i.e. the topics that can be broadly termed as "migrational studies". The issues most frequently standing out in these studies have been those of identity ("preserving and changing"), resocialization and adaptation to new social environments, while the questions on maintaining relations or ties with places of origin have been posed almost as an exception. Moreover, the majority of these studies have dealt with "large-scale" spaces,³ for example nation-states, focusing primarily on diverse psychological aspects of maintaining spatial ties, as for example emotional and symbolic bonds and representations of a "lost" (national) place of origin. On the other hand, it seems that many interesting cases of migrations and spatial relations (attachments) occurring on a smaller ("micro-") spatial scale, for example migrations from countryside to nearby urban centers, have rarely been subjected to anthropological analysis.⁴ Quite surprisingly, considering that in these latter cases an anthropologist can be faced with a wider range of possible relations between different social actors and their place of origin, that is: not only psychic and emotional, but also functional, territorial, social ties. From this point of view it is interesting to focus on two analytical subjects: first, whether and how are these diverse aspects interrelated, and second, how do these relations differentiate in regard to actors with specific social background, life histories and social roles. Some of these questions will be posed in the following chapters.

One of fundamental conclusions of several analysis of attachments to place is that the place attachment is a complex phenomenon, incorporating a variety of aspects and forms of people-place bonding.⁵ This (analytical) "complexity" is the consequence of the fact that place attachment is, at least on the ontic level, an indivisible and unique experience of the "lived space" – it is one of the experiences that "transform" space into place. This is, after all, also a general characteristic of the phenomena of the so-called social production of space, a characteristic already developed by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre.⁶ Starting from this same proposition it

1 See, for example, Auge, 2000; Eriksen, 1995; Gupta, Ferguson, 1992 and 1997; Harvey, 1989; Low, Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003a; Massey, 1997; Mlinar, 1992; Relph, 1976.

2 See, for example, Appadurai, 1998; Benko, Strohmayr, 1997; Gupta, Ferguson, 1997; Hannerz, 1992; Lefebvre, 1991; Low, Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003b; Malkki, 1997; Massey, 1994 and 1997; Soja, 1996; Watts, 1992.

3 See, for example, Malkki, 1997; and many migrational studies of Slovenian authors, e. g.: Čebulj-Sajko, 2000; Lukšič-Hacin, 1995; Mlekuž, 1999.

4 Significant anthropological research on similar topic was conducted also by Anthony P. Cohen in the 1980s (1982, 1985). However, in his interest in the "ways in which people express their attachment to a locality" (1982, 2-3), Cohen focuses almost exclusively on the social relations between people, while little attention is devoted to place attachment as spatial (and not only social) experience (Cf. Gray 2003, 225-226).

5 See, for example, Low, 1992; Low, Altman, 1992; Lovell, 1998; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974.

6 The observation refers to his book *La production de l'Espace*, edited in 1974. In the last two decades this work has been cited and reinterpreted frequently by scholars studying people-space relationships; especially by the so-labeled "postmodern" human geographers (Soja, E. W., Thrift, N., Gregory, D., Harvey, D., etc.), as well as by some social anthropologists (Kahn, M., De Boeck, F. D., Watts, M. J., Shields, R.).

means that we conceive and use any kind of classification of different aspects of the human relationship to space or place simply as heuristic approximations, i.e. necessary tools that enable us to articulate a socio-spatial reality. From this point of view, to give an example, Soja (1989; 1996) – referring to Lefebvre – identifies three general (ontological) levels of the social production of space, which are to be indivisibly linked and mutually functioning: "spatial praxes", "representations of space", and "spaces of representations". Using these concepts to explain the present topic, it can be argued that attachment to place is never only a "pure" emotional and cognitive experience of a certain place (representation of space), but that it involves also spatial praxes (behavior) and a variety of meanings that a certain place evokes for certain social actors (space of representations; space as a signifier or as a symbol) (Cf. Lovell, 1998; Low, Altman, 1992; McHugh, Mings, 1996; Tuan, 1974). And since spatial praxes and representations are both individual and culturally reproduced and mediated, the place attachment, although a subjective experience, should be in the same manner regarded as a cultural and social phenomenon. As stated already by Low (1992, 165): "while there are strong individualistic feelings that may be unique to specific people, these feelings are embedded in cultural milieu".

Besides the above mentioned, there are many other classifications and definitions of diverse aspects, forms, or even types of the people relations to space/place, on different levels of abstraction. Južnič (1987, 287–300), for example, distinguishes between four "fundamental" forms of the human spatial orientation: instrumental, emotional, territorial and symbolic. On the other hand Low (1992, 166–175) proposes a kind of typology of cultural place attachment: genealogical, "loss or destruction", economical, cosmological, pilgrimage, and narrative. The aim of the present paper is, among other things, to indicate that in a human behavior and relation to place it is often impossible to draw precise distinctions between different elements or aspects conceptualized in theoretical classifications. This "incapacity" is after all the consequence of the fact that several aspects of the place attachment are inseparably interrelated, overlapping, and – which should be from anthropological view of special interest – that in many respects they reproduce and "support" each other.

Another fundamental question arising from attempts to give a definition of place attachment is: "what do we exactly mean by using the term place?" or: "what is the real and final object ("contents") of human attachment?" It is obvious that place attachment as a human spatial

orientation can not be limited only to certain spatial elements (or representations) *per se*, but that it includes attachment to social milieus, thus it involves also more or less stable and lasting social relations. Altman and Low, for example, argued that these social relations that place signifies (embeds) may be equally or more important to the attachment process than place qua place (Low, Altman, 1992, 7). Even more, place attachment does not necessarily include only present ("real-time") social relations, but as well connects people on symbolic level, evoking memories of parents, former friends, ancestors, and of course memories of past events or of life in general. In sum, a place becomes or is created also as "a medium or milieu which embeds and is repository of a variety of life experiences, is central to those experiences, and is inseparable from them. Thus the place qua place is not necessarily the ultimate focus of the attachment" (Low, Altman, 1992, 10; cf. Relph, 1976, 37–41). Place as a phenomenon of the social production of space is composed of aspects that can be in their character regarded as more "purely" social or cultural, and of those that can be regarded as more "purely" spatial (a location, environment, landscape, "soil"); although place is *in ultima analysi* always (!) both of them, i.e. social and at the same time spatial phenomenon. Simply, it is the fundamental phenomenon of social spatiality, an outcome of wholeness and indivisibility of human (socio-)spatial experience (Relph, 1976, 7). And place attachment is just one of many forms and outcomes of converting space into place.

The aim of this paper is to illustrate some of the above-mentioned aspects of place attachment, to analyze their interrelatedness and their mutual reproduction. It will bring into focus diverse elements of the attachment to place of origin: household, farm, land, village, valley, family, past, community – in the cases of selected informants, who in certain period of their lives migrated from their native place in one of the alpine valleys to the regional center Bovec. Obviously, this kind of place attachment is a temporal process evolved through the so-called domestication of space or, as noted also by Macgregor Wise (2000, 302–308), through the territorialization of routinized (socio-spatial) praxes – "habits".⁷ In the same manner attachments and relations to place are subjected to changes in time, when the domestication moves or "spreads" into outer space, i.e. to other places. How and why are different aspects or forms of bonds with place of origin perpetuated? When and why changes occur and in what kind of socio-cultural circumstances? What are the differences in place attachment reproduction among people placed in

7 Macgregor Wyse's ideas about repetition of action and thought as a process of "establishing home" are mostly a reinterpretation of the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

different social backgrounds (contexts), social roles and life situations? All these and many other questions call for studies of place attachment also on the basis of life-history (or life experiences) analysis.

THE SETTING

The Bovec region, situated in extreme northwest corner of Slovenia, is a relatively extensive and sparsely populated (approx. 3300 inh.) area of deep alpine valleys and steep mountainous relief in the center of the Julian Alps. The region can be generally divided into two parts: the "Bovec basin" with the central town of Bovec, and more sparsely populated (6–7 villages) alpine valleys Koritnica, Trenta, Bavšica and Lepena, located north of the central basin. Before the WWII the economy of the region, especially of the alpine valleys, was more or less dependent on pastoral agriculture, with sheep breeding as the main source of "income", and cattle breeding as the additional. The typical territorial system was composed of family-owned farms situated in villages on the bottom of valleys, the intermediate pastures in the lower mountain area or at the end of valleys ("*prestaje*" or "*majne hišice*"), and communal summer mountain pastures in the higher mountain area ("*planine*"). The economy of many households was additionally sustained by family members seasonally or temporarily working in urban centers situated in lowlands (*Furlania*) and neighboring valleys (*Val Canale*) of today's Italy. Due to relative agricultural overpopulation there was a considerable emigration already in the periods before the WWII.

The socio-economic transformation of the Bovec region after the WWII can be shortly and simplistically described as: on one hand fast and intensive deagrarianization, and on the other hand slow and limited industrialization, which could not supply enough job opportunities to stop the people leaving agriculturally overpopulated land. The consequence of this transformation, and of the fact that there was limited possibility for employment also in the distance of potential daily migration, was fast emigration of a great portion of population, above all from the small villages of the northern alpine valleys. A part of emigration was directed towards Bovec, and the other part towards other urban centers in Slovenia and abroad (Vranješ, 2000). Heavy demographic and socio-economic changes resulted in visible transformation of the cultural landscape and the territorial system: empty and dilapidating houses, stalls, haybarns, "*prestajas*" and summer mountain pastures. Fields, plots, gardens and grazing-lands were soon overgrown. Since the middle of 1960s, many of these empty buildings and adjoining plots were sold to weekenders: some of them relatives or descendants of the native owners,

the majority of other newcomers from urban center all over Slovenia. Today some of the former villages are more or less totally transformed into tourist or weekenders' settlements.

The following chapters are based on ethnographic fieldwork (participant observation and interviewing) that I have periodically carried out for the last two years (2002/03) in the Bovec region. For the present purpose, life (hi)stories and experiences of six selected informants will be presented; informants that I regard as representative of diverse modes and aspects of the place attachment reproduction. All informants migrated from one of the northern alpine valleys to the town of Bovec after the WWII. All of them experienced the above-described socio-economic transformations: many of them experienced the deterioration of some parts of their former family landed property, and some of them even the disintegration of their originary village communities. Most of them sold parts of inherited native household properties, but on the other hand most of them have preserved some kind of bonds with their place of origin.

MIGRATION AND RETURNING TO THE PLACE OF ORIGIN

All informants migrated from their "home of origin" in one of the alpine valleys already in their youth (max. 20 years old). In many cases the migration was at the beginning regarded as temporary (education or temporary job) – with more or less regular returning to the native village, family, and home. Soon or later all of them got married and established their new households and families in Bovec. Life stories are full of memories of the mass emigration from native localities, which is usually interpreted as the consequence of deagrarianization, scarcity of job opportunities, difficulties to make a living, and peripheral position or communicational isolation of the Bovec region. It is interesting to note that "the responsibility" of ex-socialist government is frequently pointed out. Pavla, who migrated from the village Soča, remembers that there was an intensive "anti-agricultural" propaganda after the WWII: "*At that time they forced young people to work in factories, everybody should work in factories, goats away, and straight into factory...*"

These representations of the transformation of native places are reflected also in the perceptions of changing value of the land. Informants share the opinion that as the consequence of the lost original function, the land was losing as well its symbolic and "real" (commercial) value. Mara, for example, remembers that in the past "*land ownership was a measure of one's worth. They didn't think that it was impossible to make a living out of this land*". And it was not only the soil that lost its "origi-

nal" value, but in a way also the native local territory as a whole. "In Log⁸ there was nothing, no value anymore... And if you were clever at that time, and you had enough money, you could buy half of Log", remembers Andrej. The visual aspect of the (perceived) land value degradation is still nowadays present in diverse forms of the so-called "green desert" phenomenon, i.e. the negative representations of overgrowing of the formerly cultivated and grazed land. In local people's representations cultural landscape (in general) and its relative preservation acquired a status of a cultural and/or moral value. The following chapters will show that this local cultural value has a kind of (limited) effect also on some aspects of spatial behavior, e.g. on the decision-making process regarding the maintenance of ties with the places of origin.

Despite the heavy socio-economic transformations mentioned above, many households maintained some elements of farming as an additional subsistence activity well into the 1970s or even 1980s. Informants remember that producing their own food, at least in the years soon after the war, was necessary for survival. In most of the households at least one family member used to work in neighboring countries (Italy and Austria) and towns – especially man in mining and forestry. Consequently, in many families the farming was to a great extent done by wives, relatives (occasionally helping), and elder sons. Most of the sons got used of farming and were "initiated" into local agrarian regime already in their childhood. The responsibility rested above all on the eldest or the only son, who was usually regarded also as potential and legitimate heir. Danilo, for instance, remembers that he used to work as a shepherd-boy already as a child: "I worked as a shepherd. I was still a child, but you had to be quite strong... Two weeks I worked in Bala [summer pasture], rest of the time I worked at home". The eldest sons have carried this sense of responsibility throughout their lives, and of course this intensive sense influenced significantly the reproduction of their bonds and attachment to place of origin.

It is necessary to note that most of the families or households of the selected informants, as well as in general, soon or later experienced permanent emigration of all children, i.e. all informant's brothers and sisters. In alpine valleys of the Bovec region it was not uncommon that there was no heir prepared to dwell, to make a family or even to run some farming on the native piece of land. Consequently, in many households old parents stayed alone, frequently only an old mother, since many husbands died relatively young (work in mining, etc.). Soon after the emigration of children, the number of livestock (mainly sheep) was reduced to a minimum,

although in the majority of native homesteads there was still some farming going on. The continuity of farming, usually in a very limited extent, depended on male labor force: an old father, close relatives or neighbors, and primarily an emigrated son periodically returning "home". The regularity and frequency of the returning of emigrated sons was conditioned by their life situations, intensity and form of farming, and finally by their sense of responsibility and attachment to the "native soil and home". The emigrated sons were usually returning on weekends and holidays, but most of all in high-intensity working periods dictated by rhythm of agrarian management. Andrej's mother stayed alone and he has been regularly returning to the native house throughout his life: "I went home on holidays, so that we could cut the grass, I stayed at home all the holidays... I had to cut the grass, I was the householder, I was the only man in house, sister went away...". Almost the same did other sons: Danilo, Lojze and Pavla's brother.

Despite the fact that we are dealing with individual cases, it is possible to state (but not to generalize) that differences in maintaining functional, as well as emotional and symbolic ties with place of origin, depended also on the difference in traditional (agrarian) social and economic family roles between daughters and sons. It was the sons (legitimate or chief heirs), used of peasant labor from their childhood, who took the greater part of responsibility for the preservation of the native house, limited farming, and for helping aged parents. When there was a son, the daughters were returning to the native house more rarely. Danilo, for example, remembers that it happened that his two sisters "didn't go there [to the "native house"] for almost a year. I felt responsible. I went there with my wife every weekend". This difference came to the fore especially after parents had died and the native house remained empty. Mara, the only household's child and heir, was returning to the native house very rarely after her mother had died. She says she had no time and interest to run any kind of limited farming: "There was no interest, because if you had no cattle... and it makes no sense to keep going up and down only for 50 kg of potatoes". She also found it too expensive and troublesome to keep the old house in repair, so she finally sold it few years ago. Pavla did the same with her inherited stall and barn – she sold them to weekenders coming from a major Slovenian town. On the other hand, no one of the selected eldest sons, the chief heirs, sold the entire inherited real estate. Usually they kept at least a part of the former household (landed) property; a part that "forced" or enabled them to maintain some kind of functional ties with their place of origin: keeping in repair an old house or stall, hay harvest-

8 Village in the alpine valley of the river Koritnica.

ing, and maybe even running some limited farming (e.g. potato growing, sheep breeding). Of course, these forms of spatial behavior were never purely functional; even more, they had no relevant ("material") effect in the actors' life economies. They were a necessary reason, a way to keep on coming to the native land, to satisfy the feelings of responsibility, to meet the needs of emotional and symbolic bonds. These functional orientations or aspects of attachment to the native piece of land became more or less explicitly "ritualized".

One of such agricultural practices and "peak working periods" that can be defined as more or less explicitly "ritualized", that is as having many other socio-cultural functions and meanings than merely "productional", was certainly the hay harvesting. Hay harvest was an occasion on which kinship ties were strengthened: emigrated brothers and sisters, as well as other relatives gathered together. Frequently neighbors or other villagers came to help, too. Collective hay harvesting contributed to the reproduction of social ties and sense of solidarity. Through the hay harvest some of children maintained not only functional, but as well symbolic and social bonds with their place of origin. And finally, "cutting grass" was a mode of "preserving" cultural landscape – as a representation of vitality of the native household, village or valley. In many cases this "ritual" was re-performed also after it had no agrarian and almost no economic function anymore. But this was not the scope. Seemingly, multidimensional functions and meanings as in hay harvesting were included also in many other, if not all of the functional orientations towards the native land: repairing a roof, growing potatoes, etc. Many of these functional ties with more or less "ritualized" aspects are performed still nowadays.

In sum, the above-described modes of place attachment evolved in the course of a lifetime and included a variety of more or less explicitly related aspects. Of course, the bonds with the place of origin are changeable and differentiate between individual actors and according to different social roles. Nevertheless, it is possible to outline some general characteristics. Among all emigrated children, the eldest sons (usually also legitimate and chief heirs) were mostly those who developed the strongest bonds with their place of origin. These bonds are interrelated with the pronounced sense of responsibility for keeping native house in repair, running limited farming, and helping parents till they were alive. Some forms of these functional orientations were preserved also after parents had died. Thus, these bonds evolved as a kind of routinized praxes or habits acquired already in the childhood and perpetuated till nowadays. The difference is that some of these "habits" lost their original function and some of them were "replaced" (or supplemented) by the new ones (growing fruits, beekeeping, rebuilding a stall or barn into a "holiday house"). The motivation for maintaining these praxes came not only from a "routi-

nized" behavior and experience *per se*, but to a great extent also from strong symbolic and emotional bonds. These (spatial) praxes became a necessary reason to keep in touch with the "native land". Some of the farming activities, building or real estate maintenance, as well as native houses, plots, barns themselves (as "objects") functioned as "points of reference" for sociability of emigrated brothers and sisters, as well as other relatives, neighbors, and friends. For some of emigrated daughters and sons this "sociability" became the only aspect of the attachment to their place of origin.

SELLING A "PIECE OF ORIGIN" – A WAY OF MAINTAINING BONDS?

In the northern alpine valleys of the Bovec region many empty, unused houses, stalls, and barns were sold to weekenders coming mainly from major Slovenian towns (Ljubljana, Nova Gorica, Koper, etc.). The selling was usual above all in the cases of households which experienced the emigration of all the children. In the families of all selected informants, with the exception of Danilo's family, they sold a part of real estates that once belonged to the native household. The structures of decision-making processes were diverse in regard to circumstances, motivations, interests, and value systems of individuals and families involved, but without any doubt it was quite a traumatic decision for all of them to make.

The most frequently mentioned reasons for selling a part of family (or inherited) real estate are: the fact that many native houses (stalls, and barns) were in bad repair and their maintenance would require a considerable amount of time, effort and money; the fact that at least in the near future there was no potential heir (an emigrant's child) interested and capable to keep the real estate in repair; the fact that the real estate to be sold had no agrarian or other (productive or non-productive) function anymore; and the fact that the income was usefully spent in the economies of present-day emigrants' families. In many cases a suitable solution was to sell only a part of the native real estate and to keep the other one. This was possible due to traditional composition of the agro-pastoral household property, which usually included also farm buildings (or even small houses) on the intermediate (early) summer pastures in the lower mountain area. The part that was kept became a point of reference for reproduction of symbolic and functional bonds with the place of origin. Andrej, for example, sold inherited native house few years after his mother had died. On the other hand, he kept the "*majna hišica*" (a small house on intermediate summer pasture), which he and his wife repaired and transformed into a kind of "holiday-house". For him, remembering the fact that he sold the house of origin still evokes emotions (a kind of bad consciousness), as well as unequivocal declaration of his spatial identity: "*I couldn't do anything else...if I*



Fig. 1: Traditional stall and hay-barn in the Trenta valley.
Sl. 1: Tradicionalna hlev in senik v dolini Trente.

didn't have it there, "pod Kaludrom" [holiday-house], I would have never sold the house in Log [native village]. Because I'm a Ložan [identification within the native village (community) Log], I'm not a Bovčan [identification within the central town (community) Bovec], do you understand... Then, I would never go there again, I would have nothing to do in Log." A holiday-house thus becomes a kind of compensation for the "lost" native house, a reason, a reference, and a form of reproducing originary spatial bonds. A similar compensation, although through kinship ties, is reflected also in Pavla's case. Together with her family (mother and brother) they sold two stalls to weekenders – newcomers, but "they" kept the house, which was inherited by the eldest son. He later migrated to a quite distant Slovenian town, and consequently transformed the remaining property into a holiday-house. Paula is visiting her native house (and at the same time the native village and the valley) exclusively on the occasions when her brother or his present-day family stays there too. It is only through this kind of sociability with the relatives that she is maintaining ties with her place of origin; and in fact she would not like the house to be sold: "For me it would be very hard to pass by the house and see some other people in there. It wouldn't be the same to me. I would like the house to stay in the possession of the family. Although only as a holiday-house... if only they would keep it in repair." These and other similar statements reflect actor's desire

to perpetuate family (lineage) presence on the native land, as well as the desire to preserve the house – maybe as a "materialized memory", a symbolic bond with the land, family, or "home" of origin.

Interestingly, the above-mentioned desire, i.e. the imperative to keep the native house in repair and not to watch it dilapidating is regularly put forward as an argument in explaining the decision to sell "a piece of origin". Mara, for example, just a few years ago sold entire native family landed property that she inherited as the only heir. She says she had no other choice, as there was nobody in the present family ready to keep it in repair: "Rather than watching the house falling to ruins and the land overgrowing... I would rather watch it and I say: look how nicely they repaired the house". This opinion is commonly shared among local inhabitants. "It was such a situation... It was a burden, you can't allow that the house falls to ruins", remembers for example Lojze. In sum, there is a general agreement that it is better to sell an unused house, barn, or piece of land than to let it dilapidate and overgrow. This agreement is compatible with previously mentioned finding that in locals' representations the preservation of ("traditional") cultural landscape acquired the status of cultural value and moral imperative (Cf. Chap. 3). However, can the landscape preservation imperative really be the major argument? Or is it maybe the fact that the native house represents a kind of "materialized", symbolic bond with

the (continuity of) family or lineage (a "genealogical attachment" in Low's terms (Low 1992: 166-168)); a reference that evokes memories of childhood, household, and village of origin? Or is it maybe only an excuse, a reaction of bad conscience? But, excuse in front of what and who: mother, family, relatives, memories ..., a sense of responsibility for the continuity of lineage presence on a certain piece of land?

Statement that selling the native house can function as a mode, sometimes the only possible, of maintaining ties with the place of origin may seem paradoxical. However, the fact that we are not dealing just with simple economic transactions, but with multidimensional decisions drawn by cultural values, is confirmed also by another evidence: most of the emigrants develop more or less regular social relations with the buyers – newcomers. It is important to whom you sell, states for example Andrej: *"It isn't all the same to me. I told them that they shouldn't be offended if I will pass and stop by. After all, it used to be my house, I'm a bit emotionally tied."* As it will be noted in the next chapter, most of the selected informants keep socializing with the buyers of their former "piece of land". And it is also through this kind of sociability that people can maintain some kind of bonds with their place of origin.

There are differences in making the decision to sell a native piece of land among actors, who find themselves in distinctive social, family, or life situations in general. And there are some differences in individual motivations, interests, and value systems as well. However, through articulation of the decision-making process symbolic and emotional bonds of the actors are revealed. They all seem divided between emotional bonds rooted in the past, and rational components of decision-making process dependent on present and future family economies. Nobody is indifferent. On the other hand it seems that the eldest sons (the traditional chief heirs) are particularly unwilling to sell a "piece of origin"; that is those sons, who have for the longest time maintained not only symbolic, emotional, and social bonds, but some forms of functional ties with their places of origin as well. Only one of six selected emigrants (families) did not sell a single piece of native land – it is Danilo, the only heir that has run a limited, although more or less uneconomic, farming until now. On the other hand, there are two cases in which entire property was sold: one is Mara's, the single daughter and heir, and the other are the second-generation heirs, i.e. those who never lived and worked on the land they sold. Of course that does not mean that selling a native house can be a sign of "non-attachment" or "indifference". On the contrary, in evaluations of many emigrants it can become a possibility (maybe the only way) to preserve some kind of symbolic ties; an "emergency exit", a minor harm, a compensation reflected in the common local saying *"better to sell than to watch it dilapidating"*.

PLACE ATTACHMENT TODAY

Emigrants' life (hi)stories reflect diverse forms of development and reproduction of bonds with place of origin. There are different, and maybe particular combinations of place attachment aspects that are maintained: functional, symbolic, emotional, and finally purely territorial (possessing a real estate). Normally, changes occur in regard to reproduction of these bonds, depending on external circumstances, family situations, as well as "internal", individual psychic orientations. But the latter are as well developed and reproduced in accordance with certain life courses, social roles and acquired cultural values.

By analyzing ethnographic data, it is possible to assert that place attachment (including emotional and symbolic aspects) is especially pronounced among elder sons, i.e. those who have preserved more or less regular functional ties with their place of origin throughout their lives. Present-day intensity and form of these functional relations can be quite diverse: from a minimal maintenance of an inherited building or a plot, to a relatively intensive farming on entire inherited property. Danilo has run relatively intensive farming as an additional "economic" activity throughout entire life (growing potatoes and other vegetables, limited cattle-breeding and sheep-breeding). He regards agricultural activity as a necessary reason, a *conditio sine qua non* of his returning to the place of origin, and his maintaining of inherited property: *"If I abandoned the house, it would fall to ruins...It has to be maintained...If there were no sheep, hay harvest, potatoes, I wouldn't go there anymore... and the house would dilapidate in a couple of years"*. The opinion that there has to be some kind of functional relation in order to maintain any kind of other aspect of bonds with place of origin is generally, although not always explicitly, shared among emigrants – especially the males. Relation with a place of origin is usually a combination of "holiday-making", relaxation in the nature, recreation, and on the other hand, of desire to keep in touch with house, barn, plot, village, community, or valley of origin. But visiting a native place mostly tends to be linked with a working intention, which is usually totally marginal in family economies: a limited farming or, most frequently, activities of maintenance of the native cultural landscape. Emotional and symbolic aspects of the place attachment (and space domestication) are developed through routinized praxes, and although this praxes and traditional function of the land (fundamentally) change, they are in many cases perpetuated in a different manner, and from a different motivational standpoint (they become somehow "ritualized"). This is due to the fact that functional, emotional, and symbolic bond are interrelated and mutually reproduced. Being emotionally tied functions as an "agent", a motivator for continuation of functional orientation, and the latter in

turn reproduces feelings of attachment. At the same time this "combination" results in maintenance of a property, which finally represents a symbolic ("materialized") bond with place, family, lineage, memory.

The conclusion that functional and emotional bonds are mutually reproduced can be stated also from an emic point of view. The majority of emigrants share the opinion that their children cannot develop emotional bonds to a place where they did not live and, above all, did not work on the land. This recognition of general non-attachment of the second-generation heirs is usually pointed out, when the desire to maintain the continuity of family (lineage) presence on the native land is projected into future. These projections are often pessimistic. *"They don't stop there for a long time. They don't care; they are not interested in repairing anything. It will all fall into ruins after the parents will have died"*, says Paula about her nephews, the potential heirs of their native house. And similarly states Danilo about his son: *"He is not interested. They are not attached as we are. We used to pasture goats, and not to play on computers. They have lost the contact with the soil."* For it is through this contact *"with the soil"* that one gets emotionally tied: *"At the end there is something that remains from the childhood, something that our children will not remember."*

Attachment to the place of origin can be reproduced through maintenance of kinship relations, even when there is nobody living in the native house anymore. Returning to a native piece of land becomes an occasion for sociability of emigrated "children" and their families. It is common that emigrated sons and daughters visit their "native home" only when there comes the present owner – the heir with his family. Paula, for example, visits her native house and village almost exclusively on occasions when her deceased brother's family, otherwise living in a quite distant town, is present too. In Danilo's family the kinship relations are reproduced not only through visiting the native place but through a partly collectively run farming as well. Especially on "peak working periods", that is on (relatively ritualized) occasions of hay harvest, potato collection or plantation, etc., the emigrated sisters, together with their present-day families (husbands and children), come to help, and at the same time to visit their place of origin.

Another quite diffused aspect of the attachment to place of origin through social ties is socializing with buyers (newcomers) of a sold part of a former family landed property. Through this kind of sociability the emigrants stay, somehow symbolically, linked to their "native real estate". Most of the emigrants who sold a part of property express the desire to keep in good relations and regular communication with the new owners, usually weekenders. Pavla, for example, has been regularly socializing with weekenders – the new owners of their former family stalls: *"He [the weekender] comes*

quite often, he was here for holidays and he brought some wine and coffee. When he comes up [in Bovec], he always comes round. The last time they came both, he and his wife." And it is similar in the case of Andrej, who sold his native house only a few years ago: *"They are nice people. They brought along his brother and her sister and parents... We were all together there. It is nice to keep in touch."* After all, they – the weekenders are now "in charge" of keeping in repair the "materialized memory", the symbolic bond with childhood, family, and "home" of origin. The fact that this social behaviour is not just a simple widening of the social network, but also an expression of attachment to the native place, is proved by another piece of evidence: in the cases when the sellers are second-generation heirs (those who never lived or worked on a landed property) it is only an exception that they socialize with the new owners.

An aspect of reproducing attachment to the place of origin can also (although not necessary) be sociability and identification within present-day village communities. An emigrant returning to the native piece of land can maintain more or less extensive communication within those place community. However, in the cases of emigrants from the alpine valleys of the Bovec region this aspect is not really common – mostly due to the above-described heavy demographic and socio-economic changes that occurred after the WWII. The communities, of course, are not the same as those that they left. A great portion of emigrant's generation maybe emigrated as well, and in some cases the traditional village community, due to demographic breakdown, simply disappeared. In the cases of the selected emigrants' families (as well as in general) the involvement in present day "communities of origin" is rare, sociability or communication is limited, although not absent. It could be expected that at least male heirs have maintained more or less regular socialization within "native" communities, but that is far from being a "rule". Danilo, who has been visiting his native "village" almost every day, notices that besides massive depopulation (officially there are 12 residents left), a deterioration in community solidarity and relations between locals occurred: *"It is not anymore as it used to be. I don't know why there is hate among people. They are already alone, only five of them... and even then, if somebody comes, they don't like it. Instead of sticking together."* On the other hand Andrej emigrated from a village that has still nowadays a relatively numerous, quite integrated, and active local community. Despite that, his local social network is getting more and more limited, and lately he has been socializing less and less: *"Because I have no real fellows anymore. Rafko died, some others died already before. Now, it is another generation, fifteen, twenty years younger, and the elders emigrated anyway..."*

Regardless of the fact that present-days social relations within "native" villages are limited, there are many

other arguments – like for example family spatial origin, memories, perpetuation of routinized (today "ritualized") spatial praxes, maintenance of a property, etc. – that "convince" most of the emigrants to express their belonging and identification with the place of origin. It is quite common that emigrants living in central town of Bovec still now identify themselves, at least on a declarative level, with the place that they "left" long ago. More than identification within a present-day village community, that is an identification or declaration of belonging to a formal community, to a place as a "container" of a former social environment, a place as the soil containing family roots, a place of perpetuated socio-spatial experience, a place as "a space of praxes, representation of space, and space of representations". Andrej is only one of the many emigrated male heirs that still nowadays irrevocably declare belonging to their place of origin. At the same time he stresses the difference between him and his sister, who after emigration has never maintained so intensive bonds with their common native place: *"She became alienated. She said she doesn't like to be buried in Log, she would like to be buried in Tolmin... But I don't want to be [buried] here in Bovec. O.K., it doesn't matter where are you... but my desire is to be buried in Log."*

CONCLUSIONS

Evidences shortly presented in previous chapters confirm the assumption that place attachment is a complex phenomenon, which includes a variety of aspects, forms, and factors of a certain spatial experience. In this kind of spatial experience it is often difficult, if not impossible, to draw analytical distinctions between bonds with a place of origin as: a native piece of land (soil); a locale for sociability of relatives and friends; a container of (childhood) memories; a symbol of lineage continuity; a house as a "materialized" reference of emotional and symbolic ties; a means for producing food; a locale for making holidays or engaging in routinized praxes; a community. When analyzing place attachment feelings and behavior, it is difficult to determine the particular impact of diverse motivational factors: a desire to continue family (lineage) presence on the native piece of

land; a sense of responsibility towards parents, close relatives, and maybe actor's own social role acquired already in the childhood; an inexplicable emotional attachment; a need to work on the soil, to relax in touch with the nature; an actor's value system, a system of locally more or less shared and mediated cultural meanings.

In sum, in regard to question posed in the introductory chapter it can be stated that it is impossible and meaningless, at least in the described ethnographic cases of close-distance emigrants, to draw precise distinctions between different aspects of people – space relations: functional, symbolic, emotional, social, genealogical, etc. The purpose of these classificatory "types" of human spatial orientations and behaviour is exclusively heuristic, as these analytical aspects of the attachment to place of origin are usually interrelated and mutually reproduced or reinforced. So, for instance, there is an obvious interrelation between reproduction of certain functional ties on one hand, and emotional or symbolic bonds on the other. At the same time these bonds can be reproduced also through some forms of sociability, e.g. kinship and other social relations. But nevertheless, place attachment is primarily an indivisible and unique experience (a "phenomenon") of socially produced space (Cf. Soja, 1996; Altman, Low, 1992).

Despite the fact that this experience is fundamentally individual, it is at the same time culturally or socially (re)produced and mediated. It was noted that some of the cultural values are more or less commonly shared among interviewed emigrants, and at the same time that there are differences "depending" not only on individual circumstances, but as well on actors' family situations (contexts) and social roles. Place attachment seems to be especially pronounced in the cases of eldest sons – the (legitimate) chief heirs, who have developed a specific relation with their places of origin through perpetuation of somehow "routinized" spatial praxes (habits). Of course that does not mean that other emigrants are non-attached to their places of origin. On the contrary, for all of them these places continue to be filled with more or less relevant personal and social/cultural meanings. And from this point of view, the idea of deterritorialization is only an academic thought.

NAVEZANOST NA KRAJ: ŠTUDIJA PRIMERA BOVŠKEGA

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POVZETEK

Prispevek predstavlja izsledke antropološke terenske študije (opazovanje z udeležbo, intervjuvanje, beleženje življenjskih zgodb) navezanosti na kraj na primeru migrantov, ki so se po drugi svetovni vojni preselili v Bovec iz severno ležečih alpskih dolin. V izbranih življenjskih zgodbah emigrantov se izražajo različni aspekti, oblike, intenzitete in okoliščine navezanosti na izvorni kraj. Prispevek na empiričnih izsledkih ponazarja oziroma dokazuje medsebojno prepletenost in soodvisnost teh aspektov oziroma oblik reproduciranja prostorskih vezi, pri čemer vloge posameznih vidikov in dejavnikov ni moč jasno razločiti. Tako na primer v določenih oblikah prostorskega vedenja pogosto ne moremo razločevati med navezanostjo na izvorni kraj, ko kraj nastopa hkrati kot rodna gruda, prizorišče (locale) reprodukcije določenih socialnih vezi, nosilec individualnih in kolektivnih spominov, simbol kontinuitete prisotnosti družine oziroma rodu, sredstvo rutiniziranih in ritualiziranih (dodatnih) preživetvenih dejavnosti, materializiran izraz kontinuiranega življenjskega izkustva (reprezentacij in praks), prizorišče prostočasnih dejavnosti, referenčna točka identifikacije z izvorno lokalno skupnostjo. Pri analiziranju pomenov in vedenj, ki sestavljajo fenomen navezanosti na izvorni kraj, se namreč soočamo s prepletanjem različnih motivacijskih faktorjev: željo po ohranjanju kontinuitete družinske prisotnosti na udomačenem izseku zemeljskega površja, občutkom odgovornosti do staršev, sorodnikov in lastne družinske vloge, oblikovane že v otroštvu, potrebo po ohranjanju nekaterih (nekdanjih) eksistenčnih praks, povezanih s kulturno krajino, akterjevimi individualnimi vrednotami ter sistemom posredovanih, "kolektivnih" lokalnih kulturnih pomenov in vrednot.

Čeprav je navezanost na kraj v osnovi individualno človeško izkustvo, se nam le-to kaže tudi kot kulturno oziroma družbeno reproducirano in posredovano. Nekateri ("tipični") pomeni so v habitusih lokalnih emigrantov bolj ali manj stabilizirani, drugi se razlikujejo glede na partikularne življenjske kontekste kot tudi akterjeve družinske in družbene vloge. Tako se na primer zdi, da so na izvorni kraj še posebej navezani najstarejši sinovi (tradicionalni dediči) oziroma tisti, ki običajno najdlje ohranjajo nekatere rutinizirane (relativno ritualizirane) prostorske prakse (košnja, omejeno kmetijstvo, ovčjereja, vzdrževalna dela). Avtor trdi, da so takšni primeri posebej intenzivne navezanosti posledica dejstva, da se funkcijske oblike prostorskih vezi na eni ter simbolne in emocionalne oblike navezanosti na drugi strani vzajemno reproducirajo. Vse te analitske "oblike" prostorskih vezi pa so in ultima analysi neločljivi (torej zgolj hevristični) aspekti celovitega izkustva družbene prostorskeosti.

Ključne besede: navezanost na kraj, prostorsko izkustvo, prostorske reprezentacije, migracije, življenjske zgodbe, Bovško

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