

Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this book I have investigated identification, belonging and boundary (un)making in Georgia's Greek community by analyzing how my 49 consultants interactively position themselves, their community and the relevant out-groups they establish. In Chapter 2, I outlined the historical background necessary for understanding the historical resources consultants draw on more or less explicitly in their positioning and boundary work, focusing in particular on the (im)possibilities for identification and belonging in the various spatial and political spheres spanning the last two hundred years. Chapter 3 provided the necessary theoretical and methodological considerations, grounding my research in an approach that analyzes identification, belonging and the (un)making of boundaries as context-dependent and interactively constituted, negotiated and contested. In Chapter 4, I made transparent the processes of establishing the field, interviewing and analyzing the interview conversations. Chapters 5 to 8 were devoted to the analysis proper of the corpus. Chapter 5 addressed the first research question, namely how consultants make the languages they speak relevant for their identification and belonging. The most important finding is that consultants differ in whether they position LANGUAGE as the central category-bound predicate for GREEK category membership or whether they establish RELIGION and/or ANCESTRY to be the crucial defining attribute. The second research question, which asks about the temporal dimension of belonging, was explored in Chapter 6. The investigation showed that the end of the Soviet Union must be understood as a liminal phase of profound uncertainty; that the Soviet Union is established as a temporal point of comparison consultants use to elucidate a TODAY that they construct to be very different from the Soviet YESTERDAY; and that the end of the Soviet Union is spoken about in terms of a FAMILY BREAKDOWN both on the governmental and the personal level. Chapter 7 dealt specifically with the third research question about the (un)making of boundaries, whose connecting quality already featured explicitly in Chapter 5. Here, I showed that consultants differ greatly in how they interactively deal with the boundary many perceive to be imposed on their community in Greece. I also investigated their BELONGING TO GEORGIA in conceptualizations of ROOTEDNESS based on the time Georgian Greeks have lived on Georgian territory and how this time has led to the blurring of the already permeable

boundary between the categories GREEK and GEORGIAN, without, however, completely dissolving it for all consultants. Chapter 8 answered the fourth research question in bringing together the analysis of the preceding Chapters. I explained how positioning, identification, belonging and boundaries are established and contested in interaction, and are context-dependent, both in the lifeworlds narrated in the interviews and in the interview interaction itself. In delineating the interactional devices consultants use, I unfolded not only *what* they make relevant in terms of these questions, but also *how*.

The contribution of this book is threefold. First, it offers a methodologically novel and profound perspective to research on the severely understudied Greek community in Georgia. This account complements historical and anthropological accounts, as well as work from the field of linguistic typology. Secondly, this investigation contributes to regionally interested (post-Soviet) area studies of the Southern Caucasus and the post-Soviet Greek diaspora. Thirdly, it contributes to the transdisciplinary (linguistic, sociological, anthropological) body of research on the interactive construction of identification, belonging and boundary work. By investigating not only the interactive establishment of social categories but also their spatial and temporal dimensions, the present study provides fresh empirical and theoretical perspectives. Crucially, it is not the existence of observable differences – which in this study often take the form of diverging language use – that determines boundary (un)making, but whether these differences are made contextually relevant in establishing, negotiating and contesting boundaries.