MULTI-LOCAL RESEARCH OF MODERN RURALITY IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the epistemological and methodological challenges concerning multi-local research in four Czech rural areas that have recently embarked upon a project of international tourism which uses public space and rural landscape as one of its principal attractions. The aim of the article is to discuss the degree of relevancy of particular methods, research strategies and conceptual tools in general and the ways they are reflected and applied in our research. The article also presents some of the research outcomes that illustrate the application of these theoretical and methodological approaches. The issues discussed in this article include theoretical and practical implications of defining modern rurality as an unbounded and fluid concept, and creating a conceptual framework for the author's empirical research. The main part of the article is devoted to theoretical and practical aspects of carrying out multi-sited ethnography as a research strategy for the study of rural development through tourism. The question is whether this method can be a legitimate proposition for contemporary research of modern rurality that seeks to understand social change associated with the post-socialist transformation of the Czech rural space.

Keywords: rural development, modern rurality, tourism, multi-sited ethnography

1. Introduction

In the past two decades complex processes of political, socio-economic and cultural change in the post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe have dramatically affected rural localities and populations (Kay et al. 2012). A rapidly changing rural environment has witnessed new demands on the rural resources base. New patterns of economic activity emerged in rural areas; among them tourism, which was seen as a major agent for economic (re)development and as a lifeline for rural communities. Rural redevelopment through tourism has brought about a dilemma that lies in the symbiotic relationship between rural development processes and recreation and tourism. As the nature of rural tourism in general is to exploit rural environments for recreational purposes, it has brought the likelihood of new forms of impact, competition and conflict over identities, values and definitions of rurality (Halfacree 1997).

New interdisciplinary, theoretical and methodological approaches on how to conceptualize and study the rural, which have recently emerged in social sciences, could be employed to understand better the post-socialist rural condition impacted by tourism development. The initial stimulus for the paper came from an ongoing *iterative* ethnographic research (O'Reilly 2005; Burawoy 2003), a long-term research strategy based on systematic and focused revisits to the sites over the course of four years (2009–2013), which helped to examine the complexity of rural space and the current processes of global mobility including the movements of tourists and amenity migrants to all rural sites, as well as the processes of constructing new networks of power, social and economic relations. Within the new conceptual and methodological frameworks of rural research, modern rurality is increasingly perceived as a multiplicity of social spaces which allows and presupposes the interplay between different social actors, practices and ideas, rather than one single space. Thus, novel research focus is placed on how rural spatial and social relations are constructed, represented, materialised, performed and contested (Woods 2012: 3).

The aim of the paper is to discuss 1) modern rurality as an unbounded and fluid and its implications for chosen methods, research strategies and conceptual tools that are used to understand social change associated with the post-socialist transformation of Czech rural space, 2) theoretical and practical aspects of carrying out multi-sited ethnography as a research strategy for the study of rural development through tourism, and 3) the ways they are reflected and applied in the author's empirical research on 'Dutch villages' which refer to the Czech rural areas that have recently embarked upon a project of international tourism which uses public space and rural landscape as one of its principal attractions. As the paper is not intended to follow the 'standard' structure of a research text, it presents some of the outcomes based on the discussed methodological approaches only in a limited scope, to illustrate the appropriateness and applicability of the chosen concepts and methods. The presented results indicate that multiple views and representations of rurality are contingent on diverse memories of socialist past and post-socialist present.

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The paper is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the theoretical and methodological framework for the research of rural space under the postmodern condition particularly from the anthropological perspective. The second part presents a conceptual framework for the empirical research on 'Dutch villages' based on perspectives of the rural as a social representation, the 'local' as unbounded and fluid, and multi-sited ethnography, with the aim of understanding better locally-specific responses to post-socialist transformation of rurality. The third part outlines the research design and methods presenting the commonalities of research sites as well as the chosen method of inquiry based on the ethnography as collaboration. The fourth part presents selected results and suggestions for the empirical research on 'Dutch villages' which reflect the fluidity and diversity of the rural space, and the major component of multi-sited ethnography, that is 'following' across space.

The empirical data used in part 4 are based on participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews and long, in-depth conversations, as well as informal conversations and narrations of life stories, to determine the impact of the tourism development on the rural community, and the complex ways the community deals with rural change and transformation.

2. Defining modern rurality

Over the past few decades, buzzwords such as flow, exchange, diversity, travel and mobility and/or cultural transmission have entered a new realm – rural space that used to be relatively immune from the postmodern condition. The emergence of modern rurality has opened up interdisciplinary discussions on how to conceptualise and how to study this unbounded, multifaceted and dynamic realm. Among anthropologists, key epistemological and methodological challenges concerning the complexity of intercultural encounters in rural contexts were raised: how to do anthropology in the twenty-first century in a post-paradigmatic period; how to reinvent fieldwork that is no longer a fixed entity; how to replace fieldwork 'by immersion' with the conception of the field as an 'on-and-off thing' (Hannerz 2003, 2010); and, what are the implications of doing multi-sited ethnography.

Key terminological issues, which scholars working on 'rural' from different perspectives have to tackle, revolve around the question of what modern rurality is and how it can be conceptualised (cf. Horáková 2012). Modern rurality is largely viewed as a complex organisation that permeates the economic and social structure of the countryside in the post-industrialised world (Cecchi 2001). Due to the post-productivist transition (Ilbery 1998) characterised by a shift from production to consumption, modern rurality is completely different from the traditional form; the rural no longer implies monolithic spaces of agricultural and light industry inhabited by peasant societies (Kay et al. 2012: 59). Instead, while being based predominantly on consumption, modern rurality involves the reproduction of the rural (Halfacree 1997) which implies an alternative use of rural space; different forms of land-use consumption and concerns over the environment as well as new mobility patterns and opportunities for entrepreneurial activity. New patterns of economic activity emerging in rural areas involve tourism, which is seen as a major agent for economic (re)development and as a rescue for rural communities. With the production of new recreational rural commodities, many rural places are transformed from a place of work to a place of recreation and 'escape'. Though 'rural' is commonly used in social scientific literature (and also in public discourse) there are multiple and contested meanings of this term. In general, it is modelled along an urban-rural dichotomy. However, such an approach does not suit our research purposes well as rurality is simply too dynamic and complex to be accounted for by either absolute measures (for instance the Rurality Index) or by different sets of delineating criteria[1]. Modern rural areas are heterogeneous, multifunctional spaces of production and consumption. The boundary between the urban and rural is often blurred or downright invisible. Thus, the theoretical categories of urban and rural seem of limited use when interpreting the real world. Barthelemy and Vidal (1999) point to the significance of the interconnection between the rural space and its inhabitants, especially through their jobs, lifestyles, cultural preferences, and consumption patterns. One of the major features of modern rurality is its ability to attract resources from outside. As Cecchi claims, '"[M]odern" rurality emerges because rural resources have attracted urban ones' (2009: 55). Thus, the distortion of the rural-urban dichotomy is a key feature of modern rurality, affecting post-socialist rural space. Instead of the urban-rural duality, we observe a continuum between the urban and rural social organisation in which the boundary between the rural and urban areas fades. The same pattern applies largely to Czech rurality which is shaped by a mosaic of settlements of various sizes and rural landscape, and thus demarcating boundaries between the urban and rural is not viable in the post-industrial age (Horáková 2012: 29).

The rural is increasingly perceived as a multiplicity of social spaces rather than one single space. Due to

[1] See for instance, Marsden's et al. (1993) four-fold typology of countryside categorised according to the 'contextual knowledge' shared among community members: the preserved countryside characterised by a strong anti-development attitude of an affluent middle-class which is in a position to influence the planning system and impose reconstitution of countryside; the contested countryside typical of unresolved conflicts over the ideas of how rural development should happen between the local community and the community of newcomers; the paternalist countryside, which is similar to the contested one in that there are conflicts between the established population and newcomers; and the clientelistic countryside that shows traits of a sectorally differentiated economy (for more information see Horáková 2012: 28).

the rapid and extensive nature of transformations in the post-socialist space, rural space is no longer a stable place with rigid social stratification and specific spatial configurations. Instead, a hybrid rural space emerges, while being differentiated through the processes of 'distribution of power and status, construction and configuration of sameness and difference in local-global relations' (Kay et al. 2012: 60). In other words, these processes involve the interplay between different social actors, practices and ideas. As Shubin (2006) claims, rurality is a complex construction, embracing different sets of social and cultural relations. In the same vein, Argent (2011) and Mitchell (2013) notice the emergence of a multi-functional rural space.

The complexity of rural societies and cultures, filled up with diverse expectations and desires producing a specific rural place, may result in tensions in rural place-making. Peoples' relationship to the rural is a contested issue. One person may see and seek different things in a rural area to another person. For instance, many people tend to think of it as a relaxing environment, but for those who live and work there, the environment may be stressful (Page & Connel 2006: 425). The likelihood of new forms of impact, competition and conflict over identities, values, and definitions of rurality is high because all involved social actors fight over the same resources. As I have argued in previous texts (cf. Horáková 2010, Horáková 2012: 30), inherent tensions between the diverse perceptions of rural place and nature entail multiple frictions. Such tensions are modelled not only along the 'host' and 'guest' line, in cases of international tourism in rural areas; fault-lines may be manifold and diverse. The demands of tourists for a genuine rural experience may be in agreement with the local elite and entrepreneurs who are likely to take an opportunity to cater for tourist demands (Cocco 2010: 41) but they may be at odds with other social groups who can look on tourists as uninvited intruders.

3. A conceptual framework for the empirical research on 'Dutch villages'

The commonalities of the research sites enable us to present a conceptual framework for the empirical research on 'Dutch villages', involving three mutually related characteristics: the the rural as a social representation, 'local' as unbounded and fluid, which is approached with the research strategy of multi-sited ethnography. For the analytical purposes of the text, these three aspects with be dealt with separately.

3.1 The rural as a social representation

Based on the above-mentioned critique of dichotomy models and descriptive measures to define rurality, our research on Czech post-socialist transformation of rural communities is based on perspectives of the rural as a social representation, with the aim of understanding local responses to post-socialist transformation of rurality; in other words, we seek to understand how 'rural people create, reflect on, respond to, incorporate, adapt and resist various aspects of change' (Kay et al. 2012: 60).

The concept of the rural as a social representation investigates how 'rural' is perceived and experienced, and how it relates to the social construction of the countryside both by individuals and groups, and by both the residents of rural areas and by tourists. The key question is what the term 'rural' means to those who 'live' it: how it is experienced by those who live in the rural areas (predominantly locals) and who stay in them (predominantly foreign visitors).

3.2 The 'local' as unbounded and fluid

Due to the ongoing rural change and transformation that interconnects the rural to global processes, existing boundaries are being challenged and identities disrupted. Hence, the 'local', rather than understood as a set of bounded units is perceived as unbounded and fluid, as space that is actively socially produced. Rural place-making always entails ongoing processes of negotiation and contestation between different social actors, practices and ideas. Conflicting meanings and interpretations over the meaning and value of the rural are particularly burning in the spaces impacted by tourism development since tourism industry has the potential to bring consumers and producers and their 'products' into a close contact. In fact, few other occasions of human encounter provide so many situations of exchange between people of different backgrounds – people of different class, ethnicity, economic position, religious denomination, and culture. Tourism is extremely 'culturally intimate' (Chambers 2000: 32). This statement has far-reaching theoretical and methodological implications. Firstly, how to conceptualise 'local' and 'global', 'us' and 'them', 'hosts' and 'guests'? Local space is 'filled up' by diverse social groups and communities whose boundaries can be either impenetrable, allowing little or virtually no interaction, or porous, in which movement is fluid. With a certain degree of simplification, there are two different communities in all the researched areas: a local one, rooted in time, space, and local social relations, and a 'global' one. However, as the categories of 'guests' and 'hosts' are socially constructed they are quite mutable in reality. Tourism is much more of a reciprocal endeavour than we might first imagine – people often exchange the roles of tourist and toured. Moreover, there is considerable variability among the 'guests', as well as among the 'hosts' – neither are homogeneous groups that would follow the same interests. There can be struggles both inside the host communities and between the 'hosts' and 'guests' over land use, resources and rural economies, due to the conflicting understandings what development means to different actors.

Defining the 'hosts' and 'guests' is one the most difficult tasks that every scholar dealing with international tourism (and not only) has to face. Let us have a look at the ways the category of 'host' is constructed in the above-mentioned fieldwork sites. We can discern four different categories of people which constitute the notion of host. Three of them refer to different types of residents: 1) local permanent residents, 2) local temporary residents – re-creational (cottage/chalet) owners, 3) seasonal workers; usually Czechs who work in tourism-related jobs and who are often perceived as cultural brokers. The fourth category is represented by friends and relatives (often urbanites) visiting all the three previous categories. As it is clear, such a typology does not correspond with the notion of the local or 'host'. Thus, there is a need to challenge a common view that 'local' is the original, the natural, the authentic, as opposed to 'global' as new, external, artificially imposed, and inauthentic. To understand the impact of tourism development on the hosts in the four rural areas, one has to 'uncover the lid' of the 'host' category as it involves different segments that compete among themselves for the power and authority to determine the ways in which their place is to be made and represented. The most important condition is a degree of autonomy people have in deciding for themselves – the degree to which a tourist-receiving community has the ability to control its interactions with tourists and tourism mediators. The essential question whether the locals have managed to incorporate tourism into existing social and political structures will be dealt with in one of the following chapters (5.2) concerning the key component of multi-sited ethnography, namely the 'following' (the conflict).

3.3 Multi-sited ethnography

Third, and by far the most important feature of our research is its multi-locality (multi-sitedness). Our research was multi-sited (Marcus 1995) in order to capture as much as possible of the diversity and complexity of the field. Multi-locality, rather than multiplicity of field sites, or extending a number of field sites side by side (Horst 2009; Marcus 2009) implies *the connection* between local sites by global – by transnational, political, economic and cultural forces. Hence, the key terms associated with the concept of multi-locality include world system, post-Fordism, globalisation, transnationalism, multiple modernities, hybridity, and cosmopolitanism, among others (Hannerz 2009).

The emergence of multi-locality prepared the way for introducing multi-sited ethnography in the mid-1990s, a methodological trend in anthropological research associated with the work of the American anthropologist George Marcus (1995). Multi-sited ethnography interrogated the assumptions of 'traditional', single-sited anthropological fieldwork that (1) the boundaries of the field, the place and the space coincide, and (2) long-term participant observation takes place in a small-scale, geographically-delimited, homogeneous place. According to the pioneers of the multi-sited ethnography research programme, the idea of community as a bounded unit cannot stand up in a postmodern, globalising, transnational world in which 'traditional' places are being dissolved (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Marcus 1995). Multi-sited ethnography is a response to the understanding of culture as increasingly in flux, which appears in the social sciences after the cultural and spatial turn. The model of culturally-bounded units appears as outmoded.

The idea of multi-sited ethnography is based on several assumptions: (1) Space, including anthropological sites, is socially constructed and thus is produced by human activity (Coleman and Collins 2006; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Space is heterogeneous, which allows distinct trajectories and coexisting heterogeneity. (2) Space is *always* under construction (Falzon 2009: 4). Kay et al. (2012: 59) mention active processes of rural place-making and its reproduction. Hence, field construction is an ongoing process throughout the whole research project. Modes of constructing and selecting relevant multi-sited spaces for our research involved tasks (a) to define our research object theoretically (see section 3.1. in this text), (b) to find locations and social situations where, according to theoretical assumptions, this object may be found, and (c) to be prepared to follow the leads of the field and extend research (Nadai & Maeder 2009: 243). Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations (Marcus 1995). According to Falzon, it is 'a spatially dispersed field through which the ethnographer moves', or 'a form of (geographical) spatial de-centredness' (Falzon 2009: 2). Thus, the term 'mobile ethnography' is sometimes alternatively used (Marcus 2009).

Multi-sited ethnography is a complex research strategy confronting the ethnographer with serious theoretical, methodological and practical problems (cf. Nadai & Maeder 2009). There have been many diverse reactions to this strategy since its inception in 1995, ranging from the 'nothing new under the sun' opinions, to new elaborations on Marcus' original formulation. They involved, among others, (1) the issue of holistic aspirations of multi-sitedness (Gallo 2009), (2) the issue of comparability, and (3) the core issue of 'following'. I shall briefly deal with them in the following sections.

3.3.1 Holistic aspirations of multi-sitedness

First of all, it is fair to claim that 'the myth of complete ethnography' (Falzon 2009) concerns both single-site studies and multi-sited ones. Within multi-sited ethnography, implicit holism suggests that by studying diverse phenomena in many places, one can encompass a totality we would miss in a single place. It develops a classic idea of fieldwork in which we study the 'entire culture and social life' of the people (Hannerz 2010: 73). We by no means believe that there is a chance of drawing up

a 'complete' picture. Thus, incompleteness is inherent in any ethnographic research designs, not only in multi-sited strategy. At the same time there is a firm belief that multi-sitedness, despite this 'deficiency', can bring a deeper understanding of studied phenomena.

Within multi-sited ethnography observation or participant observation has a more limited role than in the classic model of anthropological fieldwork. What is at stake is the degree of immersion in the field, and subsequently the perceived loss of depth of knowledge (Nadai and Maeder 2009: 244). Some scholars recommend replacing the classic ideal of participant observation as 'anthropology by immersion' with 'anthropology by appointment' (Hannerz 2010; Luhrmann 1996). Spending a relatively short period of time in each site is definitely one of the drawbacks of multi-sited ethnography. Others claim that depth and multi-sitedness can be well combined (Horst 2009). Finding a balance between depth and breadth is the most delicate task faced by fieldworkers engaged in this strategy. Our research involves a series of repetitive stays (ranging from a week to two or three weeks) in all sites all-year round between 2009 and 2013, not only in peak seasons (summer and winter) when tourist flood the villages in large numbers but also in relatively peaceful, calm periods.

3.3.2 A comparative aspect of multi-sited ethnography

Multi-sited ethnography is comparative by nature; comparison is an integral dimension of such a research design and the basis for its methodology; but it may exceed the conventional comparisons in traditional ethnography that were used to compare communities and looked for contrasts and similarities (Nadai and Maeder 2009: 244). As Hovland (2009: 137) argues multi-sited ethnography does not aim to compare categories across different locations but it should rather question the way these categories are constructed. Likewise, our effort was to avoid treating the research sites as a jigsaw puzzle, to fit the 'ideoscape' together.

The ability to compare depends foremost on how the researcher conceptualises the field. If he or she views it as a 'network of localities which are linked to each other through various types of flows'(Horst 2009: 120) then obviously it is possible. By investigating different sites one *can* create a single research project. Our research sites – villages – are not cultural islands isolated from the surrounding world; they are reasonably coherent and ready for comparisons. How do we capture the linkages between the different locations? How do we trace the connections and relationships among the sites? In our research we used two different methods concerning time: research was carried out both simultaneously in different places (mainly in summer and winter peak seasons) and stepwise; in practice it meant successive field trips to the sites. Doing fieldwork in a stepwise manner proved much more efficient as it enabled us to build on existing networks, follow up ideas that developed from the preceding fieldwork, accumulate and assemble new data as well as revise and revisit existing data, redirect research routes, etc.

What are the points of connection and comparison between the field sites? As our project has theoretical or generalizing ambitions, a range of theoretically-relevant points of comparison is built into the design of the field. Comparisons are made both across sites and over time as multi-sited ethnography is longitudinal research that provides insights into the past and the present.

The research sites show a number of commonalities, which make them suitable objects for comparison. They all decided to accept a concept of tourism as development, as a response to the complex political and economic transformation of the Country after 1989. The places have become dominated by tourism – not only by international nature-based tourism through large-scale Dutch investment but also increasingly by domestic tourism. As a result, rural space is being revitalised through processes of construction and re-construction (Bryden 1994). The villages' physical structure has been changing over the last two decades with the large-scale and extensive construction of new houses, often from investment from outside. As the commodification of the rural experience for tourism is underway in all areas under study, tourist enterprises – shops, restaurants, cafes, rooms and other rental units – tend to redraw physical boundaries and spatial patterns of the villages. Local development processes are conducive to newly-emerging material, social and symbolic orders. Local communities become arenas of heterogeneous entities with internal differences. The perception of social change is not homogenous but varied according to different groups and social actors. Conflicts over the issue of the rural arise between diverse sections of the rural population rather than between 'hosts' and 'guests', as is shown below.

4. Research design and methods

4.1 Research sites

Our research focuses on selected rural communities in the Czech Republic that are undergoing profound rural change and transformation due to the advent of international nature-based tourism, particularly Dutch, which has brought about the emergence of so-called 'Dutch villages'. The term is a vernacular name for standardised recreational houses owned by the Dutch in Czech tourist areas. It is used in public discourse, predominantly by internet users, to assert strong criticism with this new form of tourism.[1] Recently, the usage of the term (in the shape of 'so-called') has increasingly appeared in official

[1] As I have noticed during my fieldwork, the term is largely refused by the local villagers. On the contrary, Dutch tourists seemed to be rather indifferent towards this term, showing no particular interest.

Tab. 1 Basic statistics of research sites.

Municipality	**Stárkov**	**Stupná (Vidochov)**	**Lipno n. Vltavou**	**Čistá (Č. Důl)**
District	Náchod	Jičín	Český Krumlov	Trutnov
Region	East Bohemia	East Bohemia	South Bohemia	East Bohemia
Population	628	53	679	734
Name of recreational locality	Green Valley Park	Arcadian Park	Landal Marina Lipno; Lipno Dreams; Villa Park Lipno; Lipno Lake Resort, etc.	Villa Park Happy Hill
Number of objects Accommodation units Accommodation capacity	22 22 151	29 29 162	countless 306 4978	43 43 344
Construction period Opening of operation	1995/6 1997	1998/9–2008 1999	1998–now 2001	1998–2000 2001

reports and documents (e.g. Ministry of Regional Development). It is also increasingly used in academia (Horáková 2012: 33). We aim to examine how contemporary forms of 'voluntary' mobility and international tourism affect local ideas of development, and what is the impact of tourism on rural localities and communities.

We have selected four research sites in the Czech Republic as in-depth case studies: **Čistá**, **Stupná, Stárkov** and **Lipno nad Vltavou** (For basic information about the research sites, see Table 1, adapted from Horáková 2013).

The selection of the case studies was made on the basis of the following criteria:

(1) *Geographic location and environmental characteristics of the sites*: All research sites are typical of economic and spatial periphery, and are located in mountain or mountain-lake areas. Čistá, Stupná (both at the foothills of the Giant Mountains – Krkonoše) and Stárkov (near the Czech-Polish border) are situated in the Eastern Bohemia region; Lipno nad Vltavou lies in South Bohemia near a lake of the same name (see Figure 1).

(2) *Historical development*: All sites recently followed similar historical trends as for migration and economic development. Before 1945 they witnessed a period of *ad hoc* political out-migration of Germans which was further accelerated after World War II. Under state socialism the areas, shaped by centralised agricultural policies and light industry, suffered from long-term selective emigration of rural people, predominantly young and educated, which further depopulated the areas. After 1989 all sites faced the negative effects of political and economic transformation, such as a decline of the population's major subsistence economies followed by a rise in unemployment and a further drop in population, which brought about overall socio-economic decline. Under such circumstances, tourism was seen by the local authorities in all the studied municipalities as a major agent for economic (re)development and diversification, and as a lifeline for

Fig. 1 Localisation of research sites. Source: Hana Horáková

Fig. 2 Green Valley Park Stárkov.
Source: http://www.greenvalleypark.com/cz/

Fig. 4 Villa Park Happy Hill Čistá Černý Důl.
Source: http://farm5.staticflickr.com/4062/4520338326_76fa836e04_o.jpg

Fig. 3 Arcadian Park Stupná.
Source: http://www.arcadian.nl/images/0040.jpg

Fig. 5 Landal Marina Lipno.
Source: Hana Horáková

the rural communities. Thus, the local authorities of all the villages adopted the concept of tourism as development (Butler & Hall 1998; Davis & Morais 2004; de Kadt 1979). They decided to make deals with Dutch investors who built tourist resorts known as 'Dutch villages' within the village territories (see Horáková 2013).

(3) *Type of tourist destination*: All research sites are home to so-called 'Dutch villages'. In fact, there are two types of Dutch tourism in the Czech rural countryside: 1) individual ownership of second homes; and 2) international tourism in recreational parks initiated by Dutch investors, attracting a largely Dutch clientele. In both types, Dutch people as owners either use these accommodation units for their own recreation, or they further rent them for profit, predominantly to other Dutch people. Stárkov is home to the tourist resort *Green Valley Park* (GVP) comprising 22 villas with 151 beds which came into being in 1998 as the first 'Dutch village' in the Country (see Figure 2). Similarly, the recreational village *Arcadian Park Stupná* consisting of 29 luxurious houses (offering 162 beds) resembling old log cabins emerged in the small village of Stupná (see Figure 3). Čistá's *Villa Park Happy Hill* is one of the first recreational compounds built from Dutch investment in the Country. It offers 344 beds in 43 uniform-looking houses (see Figure 4). Lipno nad Vltavou became one of the Czech rural areas that fully adopted the concept of tourism as development. The area serves as a prime example of a large-scale, rapidly and extensively-evolving, and largely exogenous tourism enterprise situated in a rural host community. By 2012, the village with 679 inhabitants offered more than one hundred accommodation facilities providing 4,978 beds (Infocentrum Lipno nad Vltavou) in all types of tourist infrastructure and facilities: several compounds and recreational villages (*Landal Marina Lipno*, *Lipno Dreams*, *Villa Park Lipno*, *Lipno Lake Resort*, etc.), as well as an ever-increasing number of second homes. Recently, Lipno has become a stage for diverse outdoor recreational activities, facilities, and attractions that, apart from the ramified accommodation network, form the basis of the tourism industry. In the course of time, Lipno has turned into a full-destination resort targeting both a foreign, and

increasingly domestic, and rather well-off, clientele (see Figure 5).

(4) *Types of potential problems due to recent tourism development*: As tourism development increases substantially, a number of negative effects on community life can occur. Besides economic impacts such as a rise in prices or in real estate tax, social and environmental impacts can be recorded, such as social disruption of the local community, and irrevocable changes to the physical environment. As a result, rivalry may appear both between 'hosts' and 'guests', and among factions in the community.

4.2 Methods of inquiry: ethnography as collaboration

The conceptualisation of space and place as unbounded and fluid brings new challenges to the ways of doing fieldwork, which is perhaps the most important and most widely used qualitative mode of inquiry into social and cultural conditions. What is at the forefront is a reconfiguration of the classic fieldwork as a long-term stay in a field where a researcher, as a lone wolf, studies and compares social relations, and tries to generalise the outcomes into 'area, regional, or, most optimistically, universal knowledge (Falzon 2009: 1). Today 'ethnography as/of collaboration' (Marcus 2009) is being increasingly discussed as one of the possible collaborative models in anthropology. As disciplinary boundaries tend to blur, collaboration between social anthropology and other social sciences, be that social/human geography or rural sociology, is common. Our collaboration involves researchers from two different disciplinary backgrounds – social anthropology and social geography. Both the involved disciplines perceive the rural as indivisible physical and social space placed on the urban-rural continuum. They subscribe to a basic sociological assumption as to the connection between our personal experience and the wider social context, as well as to the tensions between social reproduction and transformation (continuity and change).

Our study comprises three senior researchers, two from social anthropology and one from social geography, and a number of graduate and postgraduate students from both disciplines (ranging from six to eight each year) who work as field or research assistants; they spend repetitive stays in the sites, doing reconnaissance of the field, carrying out participant and non-participant observation, conducting interviews, collecting, transcribing and processing the data. Our research also involves a number of collaborators who are residents of the villages, without which our study would not be possible. They comprise both representatives of the political and business elite and 'ordinary' residents. In certain sites (for instance in Stupná), there are also Dutch people (both second-home owners and tourists who repeatedly arrive in 'Dutch villages') who turned out to be our valuable collaborators – informants.

The use of empirical methods is another point on the joint agenda. Our collaboration is not mechanical data gathering under a common theoretical umbrella; instead a negotiation across epistemologically diverse terrains takes place. It is not just a division of labour, or of the sites among the participating researchers; we work on interpretation together. Collaboration takes place between the researchers themselves, between the researchers and field assistants, and of course a collaborative alliance, generated through ethnography itself, is also being established between the ethnographers and informants (collaborators), that is with the researcher and researched in tandem. Such an approach requires sustained coordination in the research design, fieldwork, data analysis and interpretation. Our goal is to reframe the project through the collaboration, which is dialectical, not synthetic.

5. Selected results and suggestions for the empirical research on 'Dutch villages'

5.1 The fluidity

The fluidity and diversity of the rural space under study can be best exemplified by applying Halfacree's (2006) three-fold model of rural space: (1) rural localities; (2) the everyday lives of the rural; (3) the formal representations of the rural. The first two dimensions show distinctive spatial practices linked to production or consumption processes, and examine how rurality is experienced by local actors through everyday activity. As has already been stated, the 'Dutch villages' were directly built into the above-mentioned rural settlements. Yet, diverse spatial patterns, both physical and symbolic, are clearly discernible in all research localities. In Lipno, the visual outlook proves the existence of three bounded parts: first, so called 'Old' Lipno which consists of the original village centre, and the periphery, intended for elderly residents who were moved there into newly built row houses after they had sold their flats or houses on more lucrative lands either directly to the Dutch, or to developer companies; second, a buffer zone called 'New Lipno' for the *n*ouveau riche local residents; and third, the newly built tourist complexes and facilities that have utterly changed the character of the local area, which remind us of a 'resort landscape', even 'seaside resort' with an aesthetic value of its own (Cohen 1978: 226). Spatial boundaries are equally visible in Stárkov and Stupná. The villages are divided into two zones, between the 'old' settlement and the Green Valley Park and a resort called Arcadian Park respectively. The physical closure is accompanied by a low opportunity for, or even absence of interaction. The Dutch do not go to see the locals, and the locals rarely go to see the Dutch. The situation loosely corresponds with the mayor's opinion in Stárkov he had expressed prior to the construction of the villas. 'I want the Dutch to be on the area of 13 hectares so that they do not bother the locals in the village, so that they stay in their own places'. From time to time, mainly in the peak season,

locals do pop into the area for a drink. They commonly call it as 'going for a beer to Holland'. Locals also use an old outdoor swimming pool and children playground built during the socialist era that are accidentally situated within the 'Dutch' private area. The structure of the rural settlement in Stárkov is striking: residents occupy fifteen houses, cottage dwellers thirty and twenty-nine houses serve the Dutch touristic needs. The average influx of some 140–150 Dutch per year outnumbers the local population, including the cottage dwellers, and thus it has far-reaching consequences on the way the rural place is experienced by diverse actors.

The third aspect of Halfacree's model of rural space focuses on the formal representations of the rural, that is how rurality is framed within capitalist production, policy and media discourses. Radical transformation of the rural space under study has been following the logic of Western discourse on modernity based on a linear conceptualisation of social change paved by the processes of privatisation, marketisation and individuation. The assumption that the former socialist countries can follow the development path of Western capitalism (Verdery 1996) forms the basis for formal representation of the rural places under study spread by the local political and business elite as well as by the mainstream media. Their views certifying that tourism is the right road to success and happy future of the village can be illustrated by a remark pronounced by one of the local political elite on the physical change of Lipno rural space: 'Who would object to the changes? They are overall positive … there is a new square with plentiful cosy cafés, decorative greenery, and promenade pavements.' Similarly, a member of the local business elite said that 'Lipno used to be like a bush but now it is being civilised. If we go "to town" (to the new centre), one has to get dressed, not like in a village. Lipno links village with town. Our children won't be country bumpkins any more'. Such statement is however, often contradicted by a whole host of critics (both locals and outsiders) who largely point to excessive concentration of the tourism industry in one place which makes an entirely unnatural impression on the landscape. In sum, formal representation of the rural areas under study stems from the post-socialist power discourse on modernity advocating radical and rapid social change. It is promoted by the actors whose thoughts and practices are dominated by a post-productivist vision and are associated with the exploitation of new economic opportunities, often at all costs. Such discourse tends to disregard the complexity of social and cultural worlds in which local people live (Lampland 2002).

5.2 Following in multi-sited ethnography

The key component of multi-sited ethnography is 'following' (of ideas, people, connections, associations, relationships, objects, conflict etc.) across space. Critics, however, argue that it can be also applied in a single, local setting because ethnographers have always followed their subjects, topics and ideas. As Candea claims, any local context is always intrinsically multi-sited (Candea 2009: 34). Multiple sites may exist within a single city or village; it is up to the researcher to decide what to include in their study and what to omit. Though our research is 'traditional', namely focused on villages, we as ethnographers are faced with a multiplicity of context within a single site. There are many heterogeneous spaces of 'the village' as a physical location: one space as a human community of face-to-face interaction (for instance 'Old' Lipno which is physically separated from the recreational compounds and villages, and where most of the residents live), another space embedded in the recreational parks rather emerges as a stage for tourists and people working in the tourism sector, as a socio-economic aggregate (for instance a physically separated 'Dutch village' in Stárkov, Čistá and Stupná). The issue we study is how these spaces are held together, and whether they can lead to social disruption.

As has already been mentioned, at the core of multi-sited ethnography is an obligation to follow. We followed a *conflict* that stemmed from our initial assumptions, derived from a vast body of (predominantly) Western literature on rural change: 1) Rural resources are becoming increasingly subject to pressures arising from an ever-wider range of economic, social, political and environmental influences; 2) The commodification of rural landscape creates conflict; 3) Relationships between 'hosts' and 'guests' in modern rurality are inherently ambivalent and contested. All the facets of potential conflict stemmed from the oft-cited assumption that rural people are active agents in multiple processes of transformation (Kay et al. 2012; Pasieka 2012). Hence, the agency of local people was taken for granted. But our researched reality gradually showed itself in a different light. In practically all areas under study we as researchers came across with indifference, apathy and passivity on the part of large sections of local population (except for rare representatives of the local political and business elite), rather than with willingness to get involved in the planning and control of the development processes. Rural people tended to appear in outmoded garb as 'passive victims', 'losers' or 'objects' of social transformation, unable to cope with or adapt to the pace and scale of change (Kay et al. 2012). Thus, we had to redirect the conflict from the assumed tensions between 'hosts' and 'guests' to the conflict (mostly latent, sometimes overt) between different sections of the rural population. The major conflict that gradually emerged in all research sites is between different conceptions of development and modernity, namely post-socialist and socialist modernity. Hence, multi-sited ethnography became an opportunity to theoretically re-conceptualise fieldwork itself.

Development through tourism in all sites is presented by local government as a modernisation project that will ensure economic and demographic survival

and prosperity for the local community. This project of post-socialist modernity is shaped by the Western-oriented emphasis on a self-regulated market economy and an active civil society. It seems that those who reject this post-socialist modernity are against modernity *per se*. However, instead of the struggle between modernity and tradition, two different projects of modernity, socialist and capitalist, seem to prevail, which share a common goal to construct an entirely new social, political and economic order. Post-socialism thus creates space for cultural struggles between two modernisation projects backed by two opposing ideologies – socialism and capitalism. These struggles are over the meaning and ownership of modernity (Brandstädter 2007: 134–135).

The contest over the concept of modernity is an unequal power struggle. On the one hand, the Western discourse of modernity is presented as 'natural', as an ideal to pursue as was clear from the interviews with the local power and business elite and from media representation. Such a discourse of progressiveness silences any resistance. Any calls for a slower pace of 'modernisation' sound backward and obscurant.

Conflict over development basically takes place between the interests of a newly-created middle class which strives to increase the quality of life by creating a 'new rurality', often at all costs, and between those who have failed to adapt to the new logic of a Western-style modernity. A new hierarchy between central and marginal worlds emerges; these worlds intersect both physical and symbolic zones, and are accompanied by distinct, often incompatible practices and life-styles. Geographically marginal spaces translate into cultural marginality.

The former category includes individuals whose activities are dominated by a post-productivist vision and are associated with the exploitation of new economic opportunities (Galani-Noutafi 2013: 103). It involves various sections of the community including active resource users, project planners and leaders, local businesspeople and politicians.

The latter category represents those who oppose the hegemonic post-socialist discourse on modernity, which tends to destroy the pre-existing balance of social and cultural life; they prefer 'traditional' arrangements of the community and images of the countryside to be retained. This social group involves diverse individuals: those who have been impacted negatively by economic liberalisation and privatisation; those who miss a vital rural life of the past based on the centrality of productive activities and social and community relations; those endowed with the obsolete form of social capital based on the 'particularised trust', who are actively engaged in the intra-community bonds and networks inherited from the past (Kovács 2012: 115). Their social capital based on bonds created particularly among family members and friends, or former fellow-workers and colleagues is typical for horizontal relations. They miss linking social capital, which is formed by *vertical* bonds which interconnect people from various socio-economic and demographic groups. These residents are caught in a trap of their own, relatively-closed bonds inside their local community. Thus, continuity with the socialist past appears as a major barrier in 'development'. By lacking the 'effective' social capital they cannot comply with the requirements of post-socialist discourse on progress and modernity, and, as a result, they appear to be the most marginal actors whose attitudes towards tourism development are overwhelmingly characterised by apathy, passivity and indifference.

Their marginality is more spatial, cultural and symbolic, rather than expressed in economic terms: the differences in living standards between the two categories are not sharp, economic disparities are rather negligible. The major point of difference, highlighting social and cultural cleavages, emerges in a discursive level and revolves round the ambivalent narratives of the socialist past. The local people's diverse accounts of the past and the varied ways in which they bring the past into the present are 'used' not only as a way of resisting the changes but also a way of adapting to the new reality. As Hörschelmann and Stenning (2008: 346) point out, references to past ideologies and practices represent a symbolic resource both for challenging the new status quo, and for establishing and maintaining power in the new social order. Hence, references to the socialist past are part of the negotiation of contemporary realities framed by two complementary social processes: local empowerment vs. internal displacement and exclusion. The former is typical for those who fully support the post-socialist, Western-oriented discourse on modernity, the latter is experienced among those who share largely positive memories of socialist modernisation – both those old enough to have experienced 'really existing socialism', and younger people who did not live most of their adult lives under socialism but are severely afflicted by post-socialist Western-oriented modernisation embodied by privatisation, marketisation and individuation.

As neoliberal restructuring takes hold in the Czech Republic, these marginal people are drawing on memories to secure themselves to the ties of the socialist past. As economic reforms have done away with the social safety net of socialism, those who have failed to catch up with reforms are reimagining its positive attributes. Villagers' narratives reflect an affirmation of collective belonging rather than oppressive system of state socialism. For some, the past appears as a time of relative well-being. They are often nostalgic for a time when they were 'at the centre' of socialist society. Many identify with the ethos of socialist modernity linking people with the state through their rights to share in the redistributed social product. Thus, dependency, rather than agency informs their attitude to the current development project. Accounts of prevailing attitudes of passivity, indifference, and lack of agency are reflections of socialist paternalism which implicitly viewed society as a family, headed by a

'wise' Party (Verdery 1996: 63–64). For those who failed to catch up with the demands of the present, socialism is not dead in their social memory; instead it develops *within* capitalism, as the constant, necessary, critical accompaniment of capitalism (Caldwell 2013). The utopia-oriented language of state socialism, no matter how infamously it ended up, enables them to raise questions about 'social justice' – housing, unemployment, overall economic insecurity, simply the most acute problems of everyday life. Socialism is evoked as a kind of moral and political enlivener. Socialism, the villagers claim, would ensure to distribute wealth on ethical grounds and help vitalise the community's moral fibre.

6. Conclusion

The paper sought to examine certain epistemological and methodological challenges concerning multi-local research of four Czech rural areas that recently adopted the concept of tourism as development. Based on the perspective of modern rurality as an unbounded and fluid concept I argued that classic modes of doing fieldwork should be replaced by those that better correspond to the new conceptions of the rural as social representation. The core question the text raised was whether multi-sited ethnography can be a legitimate proposition for contemporary research of modern rurality.

Multi-sitedness seems to be inevitable in dealing with a complex world and the realities of many people's lives (Horst 2009). This research strategy has proved to be a positive development for anthropology as well as other social sciences as it enables us to transcend spatial, intellectual and disciplinary boundaries, to 'weave together accounts of ever-increasing complexity' (Candea 2009: 27). Marcus listed a number of appropriate topics for multi-sited ethnography, namely the media, science, and the global political economy. Is this strategy appropriate for a village ethnography we are currently carrying out? As Fitzgerald claims (2004), multi-sited ethnography is best suited to study different types of motion. Thus, it is suitable for studies of globalisation and modernity, of which mobility is part. Our research, though seemingly 'bounded' in four distinct localities, meets these criteria, as I was trying to show in this paper. The 'local' perceived as fluid and unbounded, is understood as a nodal point of interconnection in socially-produced space rather than as a set of bounded units. Moreover, a mobile-research style has proved highly compatible with our project, seeking to explore the dynamic of rural development through tourism. We can confirm that mobility and flow embodied by tourism and recreational activities does not allow for conceptualising the field as immobile and bounded.

The struggle to move among different sites may be rewarding since it may lead to opening up new horizons of understanding. Alternatively, the strategy may result in spoiling the outcome when a fieldworker fails to put his or her fragmented data together in a meaningful whole. Hence, multi-sited ethnography should not be thought of as a *sine qua non* of good ethnography (Candea 2009: 42). Despite some constraints mentioned above in the text, multi-sited ethnography has so far brought to our research more gains than losses. First of all, it made us more aware of the tensions between global mobility embodied by tourists' lifestyles and largely immobile and 'bounded' local communities. Next, we fully adopted the concept of following as the key component of multi-sited ethnography. By following the conflict we were able to uncover its deeper, often less-visible layers than we had thought; thus, this strategy has offered us insights into ambiguous relations among different sections of the rural population under study. It helped us to follow the emergence of a hybrid rural place filled up with changing social and power relations, and the processes of the internal 'othering' and marginalisation of the post-socialist rural place and people, particularly those who are caught in the trap of socialist modernity, characterised by bonding horizontal social capital. Finally, thanks to the possibilities to follow diverse trajectories in the sites, multi-sited ethnography has enabled intense methodological reflection within the research process as well as further theoretical developments. Our research topic has crystallized over time.

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RESUMÉ

Multilokální výzkum moderní rurality v České republice: epistemologické a metodologické problémy

Text se zabývá epistemologickými a metodologickými problémy spojenými s výzkumem polistopadové transformace venkovského prostoru z antropologické perspektivy. Na příkladu čtyř obcí v České republice, které za svoji klíčovou rozvojovou prioritu přijaly platformu mezinárodního turismu, je cílem diskutovat jak obecnou relevanci vybraných metod, výzkumných strategií a konceptuálních nástrojů, tak i jejich využití ve výzkumu tzv. holandských vesniček. Diskutované problémy zahrnují otázku definice tzv. moderní rurality jako neohraničeného a tekutého konceptu, otázku chápání venkovského prostoru jako sociální reprezentace a otázku využití etnografie mnoha dějišť (tzv. multi-sited ethnography). Text si zejména klade za cíl zodpovědět otázku, jestli je tato výzkumná metoda legitimním nástrojem při studiu moderní rurality a zdali napomáhá porozumění sociální změně spojené s postsocialistickou transformací českého venkovského prostoru