

# WHOSE COUNTRYSIDE? CONTESTED DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW RURAL RECREATIONAL LOCALITIES IN CZECHIA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE CAPITAL

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Received 2 February 2012; Accepted 14 September 2012

**Abstract:** Recent major changes in rural development in Europe instigated by the decline in farming as a determinant, followed by population loss, lack of public services, economic and ecological degradation have brought about new demands made on rural space. A shift from production to consumption known as the 'post-productivist transition' has produced a type of modern rurality characterized by the alternative use of rural space and by novel forms of social organisations and relations. The outflow of original rural inhabitants is compensated for the influx of other people who have often different perspectives of how local development should be achieved and maintained. Thus, modern rurality faces new challenges and demands. The most illustrative example is the phenomenon of the so-called Dutch villages that represent a specific form of international rural tourism combining elements of tourism and migration. The aim of the paper is to investigate rural development from the perspective of the so-called countryside capital. Focus is placed on social processes, particularly social networks that construct and use the social capital. Research questions are as follows: what type of rural space is emerging in the areas under study? Who is its active agent, and who, on the contrary, challenges and opposes the planned development, and for what reasons? What kind of tensions, dilemmas and challenges does the process produce? The theoretical-methodological framework of the paper draws on the anthropology of tourism in general, and the concept of tourism as development in particular. The paper is based on the qualitative data gained from the anthropological fieldwork held between 2008 and 2010 in the recreational localities Stárkov, Stupná, and Lipno nad Vltavou. At present, it only yields some preliminary data as the research is still in progress. An underlying aim of the project will be a complex comparative analysis of the interaction between foreign tourists and local hosts from the anthropological perspective which will reveal the differences and similarities in their conceptions of rural development.

**Key words:** modern rurality; post-productivist transition; countryside capital; 'Dutch villages'; rural tourism; anthropology of tourism; 'hosts' and 'guests'

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**Souhrn: Čí venkov? Problematika rozvoje v nových rekreačních lokalitách v Česku z perspektivy venkovského kapitálu.** Recentní zásadní změny v procesu rozvoje venkova v Evropě způsobené snížením potenciálu zemědělské činnosti, následované úbytkem obyvatelstva, služeb, hospodářským poklesem a degradací životního prostředí iniciovaly požadavek nové koncepce venkovského prostoru. Posun od produkce ke spotřebě, označovaný jako post-produktivistická tranzice (Ilbery 1998), dal vzniknout novému typu moderní rurality charakterizované alternativním využitím venkovského prostoru s novými formami sociálních organizací a sociálních vztahů. Odliv původního venkovského obyvatelstva je kompenzován nově příchozími, kteří mají často odlišné představy o tom, jak se má venkov rozvíjet a jak má být rozvoje dosaženo. Moderní rurální prostor tak čelí novým výzvám, iniciativám a požadavkům. Ilustrativním příkladem je fenomén nových rekreačních lokalit, tzv. holandských vesniček, to jest míst, která jsou po většinu roku obývána – kromě původního venkovského obyvatelstva a lokálních majitelů chat a chalup – převážně holandskými turisty a holandskými vlastníky tzv. druhých domovů. V tomto textu bych se chtěla věnovat problematice rurálního rozvoje v oblastech, kde v nedávné době vyrostly „holandské vesničky“ jako specifická forma mezinárodního rurálního turismu. Rurální rozvoj nahlížím z perspektivy tzv. venkovského sociálního kapitálu, který je používán zejména v případě, kdy dochází k transformaci rurálních zdrojů jako kapitálových aktiv venkovského turismu. Vycházím z předpokladu, že vztah mezi hlavními aktéry zapojenými do procesu přestavby venkovského kapitálu, tj. „hosty“ a „hostiteli“, je ze své podstaty ambivalentní a potenciálně konfliktní. Následná analýza vychází z předpokladu, že rozvoj venkova je proces, který zahrnuje jak sociální změnu, tak i kontinuitu. Důraz je kladen na sociální procesy, zejména sociální sítě, které venkovský kapitál konstruují a používají. V popředí zájmu je tato výzkumná otázka: jaký typ venkovského prostoru v dotčených obcích vzniká? Kdo je jeho aktivním hybatelem, a kdo naopak plánovaný rozvoj rozporuje či nepodporuje a z jakých důvodů? Jaká pozitiva a negativa (napětí, dilemata a výzvy) přináší proces transformace rurálních zdrojů ve venkovský kapitál? Teoreticko-metodologický rámec příspěvku je interdisciplinární; pracuje s koncepty z oblasti antropologie turismu, zejména s koncepcí turismu jako rozvoje, dále sociální geografie a rurální sociologie. Text je založen na kvalitativních datech získaných z antropologických terénních výzkumů, které byly prováděny v letech 2008-10 v lokalitách Stárkov u Hronova, Stupná u Nové Paky a Lipno nad Vltavou. V současné době je možné prezentovat pouze dílčí údaje, neboť výzkumný projekt stále probíhá. Cílem projektu bude komplexní analýza interakcí mezi zahraničními turisty/majiteli druhých domovů a místních „hostitelů“ z antropologické perspektivy, jež odhalí rozdíly a podobnosti v pojetí rozvoje venkova u obou skupin.

**Klíčová slova:** moderní ruralita; post-produktivistická tranzice; venkovský kapitál; „holandské vesničky“; rurální turismus; antropologie turismu; „hosté“ a „hostitelé“

## 1. Introduction

Recent major changes in rural development in Europe instigated by the decline in farming as a determinant, followed by population loss, lack of public services, economic and ecological degradation have brought about new demands made on rural space (Meethan 2001; Árnason et al. 2009). A shift from production to consumption known as the 'post-productivist transition' (Ilbery 1998) has produced a type of modern rurality characterized by the alternative use of rural space and by novel forms of social organisations and social relations.

Likewise in other parts of Europe, rural areas in the Czech Republic are experiencing drastic changes in all layers of social reality. Post-communist transformation has contributed to the decline of the social, economic and demographic indicators of rural development, characterized by a sharp decline in production, a non-lucrative offer of working opportunities, a high rate of unemployment, and an ageing population caused by the steady rural exodus. The exodus of large sectors of the rural population to cities is one of the most significant factors

that largely contribute to the decline of Czech villages. Those who leave are mostly young, educated people who cannot find appropriate jobs in the villages and the surroundings. Those who remain are mostly old, economically unproductive people. Thus, migration continues to damage the demographic structure of rural populations. Some of the most remote and 'unattractive' villages are even on the edge of extinction<sup>2</sup>. Many of the remote, peripheral localities facing an overall deteriorating situation had to solve a problem how to 'survive' transformation. Their responses were diverse due to the historical, socio-economic, demographic and ecological factors. As they were left to compete for non-state resources, opportunities emerged for both various local groups and other actors, such as tourists, businessmen, NGOs and development agencies, to more actively participate in reconfiguring local places and lives. Rural regions and villages have developed 'unique' local advantages in a bid to attract investment, new inhabitants, or other resources. Some areas start ecological farming, others recast themselves as centres of health or heritage, or rural tourism.

In many areas tourism has become a 'creative' solution to both the expected and unexpected social consequences of rural society transformation. It arose as an integral part of diverse rural economies by 'using' countryside and natural environment as its significant basis and resource. Rural space has been commercialized and commodified. In other words, nature has turned into a tourist product. Different places and regions are being planned and transformed in order to attract more 'nature-oriented' tourists (Horáková 2010a: 65-66). Transformation of rural landscape for tourism purposes has yielded new geographies of tourism.

Novel uses of rural space and natural environment include, above all, the rapid growth of international nature-based tourism whose aim is to meet the needs of Western urbanized and industrialized societies. A case in point is Dutch tourists seeking vacations in a Czech rural environment. Basically, there are two types of Dutch nature-based tourism. Firstly, individual ownership of second homes by the Dutch in Czech rural countryside, and secondly, international tourism in recreational parks initiated by Dutch investors, attracting predominantly Dutch clientele. As for the former, a recent foreign (predominantly Dutch) purchase of the country vacation homes has become common throughout Czech rural areas. The Czech Republic announces 974 Dutch second homes, which makes 2.7 per cent of the whole figure of the Dutch second homes situated abroad<sup>3</sup>. As for the second type of Dutch nature-based tourism in recreational parks, there is a growing interest in building new recreational resorts in rural areas. To secure a livelihood by diversifying their agricultural activities, rural populations offer their assets – public space and landscape - to international forms of tourism. Communities are selling their vacant farmlands, abandoned agricultural fields and meadows to foreigners seeking to build new recreational localities that have been commonly named as 'Dutch villages' (Horáková 2010a; Horáková 2012). They comprise diverse rural areas located predominantly in Eastern and Southern Bohemia, both at the foothills and in mountain regions. Three of them have been selected as research sites for the purposes of this study: Stárkov and Stupná in the Eastern Bohemia; Lipno nad Vltavou in the Southern Bohemia<sup>4</sup>.

The aim of the paper is to investigate rural development in 'Dutch villages' from the perspective of the so-called countryside capital (Page and Connell 2006: 438). There is a widely held assumption that rural development is a multi-level, multi-actor, complex process that goes beyond the restructuring of agriculture and other sectors of rural economy. Rural resources are becoming increasingly subject to pressures arising from an ever wider range of economic, social, political and environmental influences. The plurality of rural actors who are involved in the commodification of rural resources inevitably creates conflict; and, potential conflicts may

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<sup>2</sup> At the same time, a new type of migration start to affect the rural areas located in the vicinity of larger urban settlements as wealthier people decide to move from cities to rural areas in order to enhance their standards of living. These reverse migration flows called suburbanization have a significant impact on the rural areas. One of the most important consequences is the blurring of the traditional urban-rural dichotomy (Binek et al. 2007).

<sup>3</sup> According to the Dutch Housing Need Survey 2002/2003, quoted in Priemus 2005.

<sup>4</sup> The analysis of Stárkov and Lipno focusing on the impact of tourism on the local populations was published in *Anthropological Notebooks* 16:1, see Horáková 2010a. Furthermore, the two localities in relation to the hosts and guest interaction were the subject matter of the article entitled *Transformation of Rural Communities: Mobility, Tourism and Identity* (Horáková 2010b). All three research sites have also been objects of study in a number of bachelor and diploma theses, for instance Nožičková 2010; Nožičková 2007; Bareš 2009.

threaten the quality of countryside capital assets, and thus undermine rural sustainability. The problem is that rural newcomers are drawn to an idealized countryside as a place in which to live, work, or retire. They tend to have different views on rural development, particularly on the recreation-amenity development.

## 1. Theory and methods

Rural development in relation to amenity migration<sup>5</sup> and second home tourism/residential tourism concepts is conventionally studied with regard to diverse geographical, sociological, or environmental approaches (Vágner, Fialová et al. 2004) Those theoretical perspectives that deserve special attention reflect the relationship between rural research and globalization. Diverse relational global - rural perspectives discuss the place of the rural in contemporary globalization dynamics and study how globalization is experienced in rural localities (Nelson and Nelson 2010; Woods 2007; Massey 2005; Murdoch 2003).

The logical outcome of the processes of rural globalization is the concept of the **global countryside** 'as a hypothetical space corresponding to a condition of global interrelatedness' which is applied to show how globalization remakes and reconstituted rural places while highlighting the interaction of local and global actors (Woods 2007: 486). The question how are rural places remade under globalization becomes central to the understanding of the global countryside.

The main point of departure for the analysis is the assumption that rural development is a process of both social change and continuity<sup>6</sup>. It happens through social processes, particularly social networks that aim to re-cast rural resources as countryside capital while constructing and using social capital. As networks are constituted by heterogeneous entities that are aligned in a variety of ways, they give rise to slightly different ruralities. As Murdoch reminds us there is no single vantage point from which the panoply of rural relations can be seen (Murdoch 2003: 274). Similarly, Woods claims that '*emergent* global countryside is not a uniform, homogeneous space, but rather is differentially articulated, and contested, through particular rural *places*' (Woods 2007: 494). Rural development under globalization therefore cannot be understood as a linear narrative. Instead, Murdoch mentions the term 'hybrid countryside', pointing to multiple dimensions through which rural space is constituted and defined (Murdoch 2003: 274). Hybrid countryside involves the mixing of local and global human actors, processes and influences. Focus is thus placed on the following research questions: How does rural development happen from the point of view of those actually involved in it? What type of rural space is emerging in the areas under study? Who is its active agent, and who, on the contrary, challenges and opposes the planned development, and for what reasons? What are the benefits of re-casting the rural resource as countryside capital? What kind of tensions, dilemmas and challenges does the process produce? The aim is to achieve a better understanding how rural development takes place on the ground. In particular, to find out the role of various networks for development, how people claim and attribute identities as 'local' and how new rural identities as a type of social capital are constructed.

The paper is based on a multi-sited ethnography conducted between 2008 and 2010 in the three above-mentioned Czech rural areas that have recently embarked upon the project of international nature-based tourism. The qualitative methods we used include semi-structural in-depth interviews with residents and foreign tourists, and both participant and non-participant observation of the everyday practices of the 'hosts' and 'guests'. The data were synthesized to

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<sup>5</sup> Amenity migration, the movement of people based on the attraction of natural and/or cultural amenities, is a phenomenon of ever increasing interest to rural geographers and other social scientists due to the ways in which, in accordance with other social, economic and political processes, it is contributing to the fundamental transformation of rural communities throughout the world (Gosnell and Abrams 2011).

<sup>6</sup> In relation to continuity and change, a concept of rural gentrification can also be applied to understand post-industrial rural development. Though for some authors gentrification may indicate an inherently urban process, there are signs of growing popular and academic usage of the term rural gentrification, especially in British rural studies and the studies focused on rural areas of the USA and Canada (see for instance Phillips 2008; Smith and Holt 2005). Some studies reveal the usefulness of the concept of rural gentrification as permanent tourism (see Hines 2010) or as a migration process (Hjort 2009).

answer the following questions: Who sets the stage for the development of rural culture in these sites? How are the locals and tourists involved? Are the local people passive victims, or rather accelerators in constructing a new image of their locality? In other words, do they adjust or reorder their place? The main hypothesis of this work is that the relationship between 'hosts' and 'guests' in post-communist rurality is often fraught with ambivalences and frictions due to the ways rural space is constructed and reconstructed as countryside capital. Our aim is to evaluate residents' perceptions on current development projects. Although the research is still in progress, we believe that the exposed arguments might stimulate discussion and contribute to further investigation along the same path. The overall aim is to contribute to the understanding of how people shape their lives by making the places they inhabit.

The broader theoretical-methodological framework for the analysis is interdisciplinary, involving concepts used by social anthropology, particularly the anthropology of tourism, social geography, and rural sociology. The concept that seems convenient for the study focused on rural tourism from the anthropological perspective that stresses the holistic nature of rural tourism is that of **countryside capital**. Scholars are more familiar with terms such as human capital, social capital, physical capital, and natural capital; thus, the term countryside capital is one that may be less familiar. Garrod, Wornell, and Youell (2006) showed that the term was first used in the UK by the Countryside Agency, with the aim to promote sustainable land management and to encourage tourism businesses to connect better with their local economy. Since then, the concept has been used to recast rural resources as capital assets of the rural tourism industry (see, for example, McClinchey and Carmichael 2010). Despite the application of the term, there is still no widely agreed-upon definition of countryside capital. The Countryside agency adopts the definition as 'the fabric of the countryside, its villages and its market towns', which is difficult to use for research purposes. The problem is that countryside capital may involve both tangible and intangible resources. According to Page and Connell, it identifies the different components of the countryside as different forms of capital including: natural capital (wildlife populations); built capital (rural settlements); social capital, including local cultural traditions: language, culture, people, lifestyles, and food (Page and Connell 2006: 438).

Why is the concept of countryside capital, despite its inherent methodological and epistemological difficulties (especially difficulties in quantifying indirect or intangible components) important for the analysis of rural development? The main reason is an ever increasing commercialization and commodification of rural space that is evident in the range of tourist products available in rural areas. Countryside capital may have an indirect role in generating an image that attracts tourists to a particular destination area. Hence, attracting tourists, satisfying their expectations and encouraging them to return in the future, are vital elements of successful rural tourism. The problem is that countryside capital is to be enjoyed and experienced not only by tourists but also by local residents. A stronger sense of community and place and a higher quality of life can be achieved if there is a consensus on the ways rural development happens.

## 2. Research sites

Three research sites have been selected for the analysis of rural development through the concept of countryside capital: Stárkov, Stupná (part of the municipality of Vidochov) and Lipná nad Vltavou (see Graph 1). Basic statistics of the research sites is provided in Table 1.

Municipality	<b>Stárvkov</b>	<b>Stupná (Vidochov)</b>	<b>Lipno n.Vltavou</b>
District	Náchod	Jičín	Český Krumlov
Name of recreational Locality	<b>Green Valley Park</b>	<b>Arcadian Park</b>	<b>Landal Marina Lipno</b>
Number of objects	22	27	37
Number of accommodation units	22	29	306
Accommodation capacity	151	135	1662
Construction period	1995/6	1998/9-2008	1998-2001
Opening of operation	1997	1999	2001

Tab 1. Basic statistics of research sites. (Adapted from Nožičková 2010).

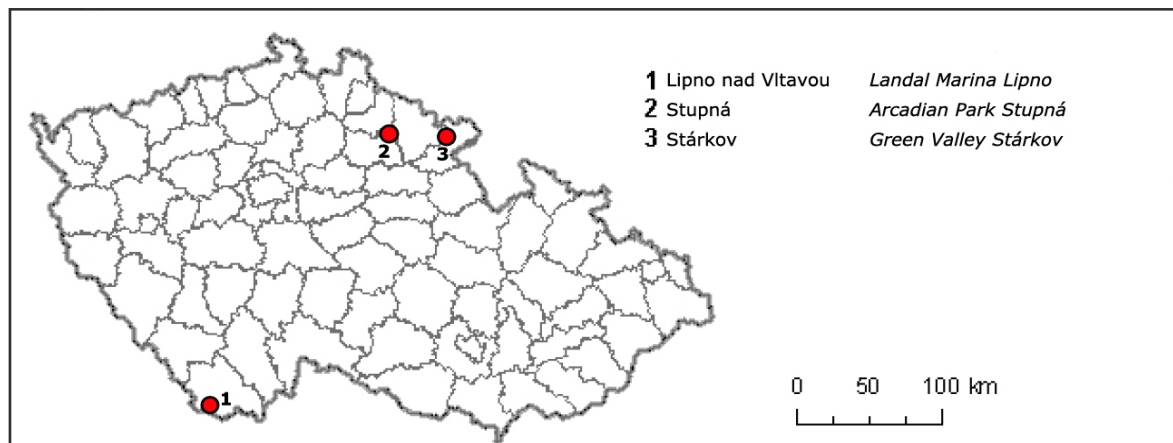


Fig 1. Localization of the sites under study within Czechia.

A small town of **Stárvkov** is situated in the Eastern Bohemia region near the Polish border (see Picture 1). According to the preliminary data of the 2011 census, the town has 628 inhabitants. In the past it was a place of farmers, coal miners, weavers, forestry and a textile industry. The first half of the twentieth century saw the development of timber industry and agriculture (flax). After 1989, most of the former industries and agricultural activities ceased to exist. The tourist resort *Green Valley Park* (GVP) came into being in 1998 as the first ‘Dutch village’<sup>7</sup> in the Czech Republic and so far it comprises twenty two villas with 151 beds; a plan is to build another thirty-three villas in the near future. Initially, the GVP was a Dutch investment as foreigners could not buy property in the Czech Republic. After the accession of the country to the EU in 2004 and a subsequent change of legislature, GVP was a Czech company with Dutch capital. In 2009 Foreign exchange law was passed, which enabled all EU citizens to acquire real estates as ‘natural persons’. Thus, the former Czech agents, who ‘formally’ managed the Dutch companies, were replaced by Dutch nationals, and the company is now in full Dutch ownership.

<sup>7</sup> The term ‘Dutch village’ is a vernacular name for standardized recreational houses owned by the Dutch within Czech villages. It is used in public discourse, predominantly by the internet users, to assert strong criticism with this new form of international tourism. 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. Recently, the usage of the term (in the shape of ‘so-called’) has increasingly appeared in official reports and documents (e.g. Ministry of Regional Development). It is also increasingly being used in academia (cf. Horáková 2010a: 70).





Fig 2, 3. Green Valley Park Stárkov.

**Stupná** is a small village (part of the municipality of Vidochov) located at the foothills of the Giant Mountains in Eastern Bohemia (see Picture 1). In the past there were four water mills, a school (closed in 1954), a pub and a shop (closed in the 1960s). Like the other research sites, Stupná used to be part of the territory surrendered to the third Reich after the Munich Treaty of 1938, and as such, it witnessed a dramatic population exchange after 1945 – Germans left and Czechs arrived. From the 1960s the area became a magnet for Czech cottage dwellers who bought abandoned houses left after the Germans' displacement. At present the village has the local population number of forty-five people.

In 1998 a resort called *Arcadian Park Stupná* based on the project of international nature-based tourism emerged in this village. The Dutch company Arcadian Ard-Jan Gijbertsen built a 'Dutch village' consisting of twenty-nine luxurious houses resembling old log cabins. Each of the houses is possessed by a Dutch owner who rents it further to Dutch, German and recently also Polish tourists. The average stay is two weeks per year; many of the visitors come repeatedly because 'the countryside is so beautiful here'. The resort forms an enclave physically separated from the old village. The houses of the tourist resort are located on the hill, whereas the old residents' houses as well as weekend houses of cottage dwellers are situated in the valley. The initial idea of the company was to build a shop and a pub. However, it never materialized.

The structure of this rural settlement 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. There is only one house in the village where a Dutch family lives all year round. Another Dutch married couple bought a house in 2006 as their second home; they come four times a year. Today's residents are predominantly pensioners; their children have left due to the overall decline of the village (no jobs, no public services).



Fig 4, 5. Arcadian Park Stupná.

**Lipno nad Vltavou** is a village in Southern Bohemia lying near the lake of the same name on the left side of the Vltava river (see Picture 1). According to the preliminary data of the 2011 census, it has 616 inhabitants. In the past, the village, largely populated by Germans, was a small timber milling settlement and its population's major subsistence economy was timber floating along the Vltava River. After the Second World War, many Germans were displaced and the area was gradually repopulated by ethnic Czechs. After 1989, due to the uniquely preserved countryside on the one hand, and the overall economic and social decline of the village, the then village authorities made a deal with a Dutch investor who built (between 1998 and 2001) a tourist resort which has become known as *Landal Marina Lipno*. This recreational park stretches in the area of 13 hectares offering over 306 studios and apartments. Besides, it offers their clientele (predominantly Dutch) a whole host of out-door and in-door facilities: a large in-door swimming pool, restaurants, bars, sports-grounds, marina for sailing boats (136 anchoring places), etc.



Fig 6, 7. Landal Marina Lipno.



Fig 8. Old Lipno.

### 3. Commonalities of the research sites

Despite the different locations, economic standards, sizes etc. all the localities under study have much in common that make them suitable objects for comparison. As for migration and economic development, they followed similar historical trends. Before 1945 they witnessed a period of *ad hoc* political out-migration of Germans. As part of the territory surrendered to the Third Reich after the Munich Treaty of 1938, they were all typical of economic and spatial periphery: they were considered as either agricultural areas or areas specialized in the production of raw materials or light industries. Immediately after 1945 the localities were subject to a period of an accelerated out-migration of Germans, which left many village houses abandoned. In socialist Czechoslovakia, between 1948 and 1989, all rural areas were predominantly shaped by centralized, politically motivated agricultural policies. Besides agricultural farms many rural areas, especially the ones near mountain ranges, were sites of light industries, such as paper mills, lumbering, timber floating, and iron-ore mining. As for the demographic situation in rural areas under socialism, the development was marked by a steady exodus of rural people to cities, and national week-end in-migration. The long-term selective emigration (those who left were mostly young, educated people) was a response to political and socio-economic changes, particularly to the decrease in a number of job opportunities due to the mechanization of agriculture and reduction of businesses together with much larger investment by socialist governments in heavy industries. This negative demographic trend was even reinforced by the application of the so-called central settlement scheme of the 1970s and 1980s which contributed to the differentiation of country settlements according to their size and position; simply, no investment in small and remote settlements, and preference for selected 'settlement centres of local importance' (Binek et al. 2007).

After 1989 all the localities under study faced a challenge of the complex political and economic transformation of the country. Negative effects of the transformation of the Czech economy on these rural areas involved an increase in unemployment; the overall economic stagnation and decline of the population's major subsistence economies (timber floating along the Moldau River in the case of Lipno; coal mining, weavers industry and forestry in Stárkov; agriculture and paper mills in Stupná); the population decline, due to the migration of young and educated rural people to urban areas; the change of the demographic structure with predominantly ageing population. The geographical location of these rural areas (peripheral, rather mountainous



regions with poor agricultural land) effectively doomed them as sites for agricultural and/or another industrial development, let alone as sites suitable for suburbanization. Thus, all of the localities had to solve the issue of future development that would help secure working opportunities for the local people, and that would be compatible with the local conditions. The only branch of industry that was naturally taken into consideration by the local elites as a response to the rural decline was international amenity based tourism that led to the **internalization of second homes**.

#### 4. Tourism as development

Tourism became a 'creative' solution to both the expected and unexpected social consequences of rural society transformation. Tourism was viewed as an 'agent of change' (Meethan 2001: 45) and as a rescue; simply, as a mechanism for revitalizing a declining economy and community. Moreover, development was viewed as a *neutral* mechanism leaving behind the fact that the idea of development is used by different social actors and therefore can never be consensual. The view that tourism is one of the most invasive economic activities in the occupation of territories, spaces and places anywhere in the human settlements was not taken into account either.

So, all of the rural areas have embarked upon the project of international nature-based tourism and started to implement tourism policies that exploit public space and the material and symbolic importance of rural landscape. International amenity based tourism and the subsequent internalization of second homes is associated with the influx of direct foreign investment in the Czech Republic in the late 1990s. The arrival of foreign, especially Dutch capital in the Czech market is related to the processes of democratization and liberalization of the Czech economy. Dutch investment in real estates was stimulated by a number of factors: an image of the Czech Republic as a safe place for investment; an expanding real estate market; an increasing attractiveness of the country, especially its environmentally-valued countryside; convenient physical-geographical conditions enabling a wide recreational use; favourable prices, offer and quality of public services, compared to other post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe; a continuity of Dutch recreation in Czechia of the communist era<sup>8</sup>.

Dutch investment in post-communist Czech Republic focused both on the construction of recreational parks and villages, and on the individual ownership of second homes in the Czech rural countryside. Dutch investors bought the land both from the municipalities and local owners. Municipalities, both their representatives and residents had vast expectation, in relation to the construction and operation of international amenity based tourism. They thought the newly built tourist resorts would increase the attractiveness of the area and help revitalize its social and economic dimension; the construction and operation of the resorts were supposed to have reduced unemployment, by creating job opportunities for the locals and encouraging local entrepreneurship. Above all, economic advantages for local population, entrepreneurs and also municipal budgets were expected. However, the possibilities of the municipalities to determine their own incomes are limited by the existing tax and business legislation. Therefore the biggest contribution to the local budget is the real estate tax and local touristic fees that are however subject to seasonality. The direct impact of the recreational localities to decrease unemployment has proven negligible, due to a low number of newly created jobs. Moreover, profit has not materialized, largely due to the economic leakages (esp. in Lipno)<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> There is continuity in the Dutch incoming tourism with the past. Dutch tourists were coming to communist Czechoslovakia to spend their holidays in the mountains and in the landscape near the natural lakes (mostly in their caravans, or tents).

<sup>9</sup> Economic leakages appeared after the changes in Czech business legislation. In 2009 Foreign exchange law was passed, which enabled all EU citizens to acquire real estates as 'natural persons'. Thus, the former Czech agents, who 'formally' managed the Dutch companies, were replaced by Dutch nationals, which directed the profits to the Netherlands. Thus, the money is not finally spent in the original community who actually hosted the tourists.

## 5. 'Hosts' and 'guests'

All the rural communities under study are heterogeneous entities with internal differences, conflicting interests and the dynamic hierarchy of power. Cleavages run along diverse fault lines, be that physical boundaries; mental (symbolic) boundaries; age; gender; education; socio-economic positions; engagement in community clubs and associations. Re(de)construction of rural space is associated with the issue of **belonging and non-belonging**, inclusion and exclusion: we seek to examine how individuals and social groups include and exclude themselves and others in relation to a place.

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 epitomized by foreign tourists and the second home owners.

Locals' categorisation of tourists and second home owners refers to the local identity issues: who or what occupies the role of 'other'. How do local people perceive and understand them? Here, the concept of 'stranger' (Burns 1999) comes to the forefront. The semantics of tourist-local interaction implies that a tourist does not become part of any long-term reciprocity structure. The same applies to second home owners though the length and nature of their stays in the studied areas largely differ from 'ordinary' tourists.

The encounter between 'host' and 'guest' is of profound importance in the study of tourism (Burns 1999: 99). The host-guest relation is inherently asymmetrical, entailing large-scale disparities between the visitors and visited. In all the case studies, language is a key indicator of the asymmetry. Dutch tourists do not speak Czech, and Czechs do not speak Dutch. Moreover, local inhabitants' ability to communicate in English or German is also considerably limited. This asymmetry is further deepened by other factors. As Crick reminds us, one member is at play, one is at work; one has usually economic assets and little cultural knowledge, the other has cultural capital but little money (Crick 1989). Moreover, tourists have not come to interact with the locals – their main goal is having a holiday, leisure, pleasure, and escape from daily routines (Burns 1999). A relatively low number of encounter possibilities is restricted to a small part of the local population. These people called culture-brokers or marginal men (Smith 1977) are usually directly or indirectly employed in the tourism industry. All the research sites, however, indicate an extremely low number of the locals employed in the Dutch villages. Moreover, they mostly hold low-income and irregular jobs as cleaners, caretakers, gardeners and the like.

## 6. Reconstructing rural space through international tourism

Another challenge to potential interaction and intercultural communication has to do with the ways space is constructed. Spatial distribution may contribute to either blurring or reinforcing symbolic boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. In all the research sites public space and rural landscape have become both a place for living and place for vacation. What is the relation between them in terms of spatial difference? All the rural areas share the same pattern of the physical geography: the 'Dutch villages' were directly built *into* the above-mentioned rural settlements. Yet, in the form of the semi-separated or overtly separated enclaves they have generated gated communities (sometimes without fencing) in which Dutch language and social conventions operate to more or less total exclusion of anything local. It is not an unfamiliar picture in the literature on tourism in other parts of the world including the geographical and economic peripheries. Spatial segregation can highlight both social and economic differences between the host population and the guests (Meethan 2001: 43). As rural places are appropriated by the outsiders local people certainly suffer from the change in their space, creating the geography often distinct from the tourist areas (with the economic centralities) and local areas (with the social centralities). These are new places and at the same time non-tourist places that become social boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

Both physical and symbolic spatial patterns are clearly discernible in all the cases. In Lipno, the visual outlook proves the existence of three neatly 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 *nouveau riche* local residents, and *Landal Marina Lipno* as an enclave for foreign tourists and second home owners. Restrictive spatial patterns can be observed in the differential access to the local aqua-park. In the peak season, locals can visit it only between 4 and 9 pm (though at a reduced entrance fee). The spatial boundaries are equally visible in Stárkov and Stupná. The *Arcadian Park Stupná* forms an enclave physically separated from the old village. The houses are located on the hill, whereas the old residents' houses as well as weekend houses of cottage dwellers are situated in the valley. Furthermore, the interaction between hosts and guests in Stupná is hindered by the non-existence of any meeting places; there is no shop or a pub; the only means of interaction is a bench at the bus stop (that goes twice a day). Foreign tourists do not seek the locals and vice versa; they prefer to stay in their houses, or go on day-trips by car in the surroundings. Similarly, Stárkov is divided into two zones, between the 'old' settlement and the *Green Valley Park (GVP)*. The physical closure is accompanied by a low opportunity, even impossibility for interaction (recently the Dutch owner placed notices around the area that reads *Prive terrain (Private)*). The Dutch do not go to see the locals, and the locals rarely go to see the Dutch. The situation loosely corresponds with the current mayor's opinion 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 (which is allowed, unlike the No entry to the residential and recreational area for the Dutch tourists). They commonly call it as 'going for a beer to Holland'. Irrespective of the ban, locals also use an old outdoor swimming pool and children playground built during the communist times that are accidentally situated within the 'Dutch' area. In such an atmosphere, a researcher can come across bizarre situations: I asked one of the locals, an elderly woman, about the GVP; at first she did not know what I was speaking about. After I explained, she vaguely recalled it but said it was too far away for her to walk there – she never visited the place nor even considered the GVP to be an integral part of the village.

The overall visual outlook of the 'old' parts of almost all the places does not prove the existence of a foreign clientele which would bring prosperity to the villages: most local houses are old, inadequately maintained, many of them still waiting for reconstruction and repair. Local roads are in a terrible condition. Public services are declining, a comparable situation to other cross-border villages without revenues from tourism. The old rural settlement in all the researched places is in sharp contrast to the newly built-up areas intended for foreign clientele. Stupná may serve an illustrating example of the revitalization failure as the external resources have failed to meet the local development needs. One of the reasons is an inadequate contribution of the *Arcadian Park* to the municipality budget: through the real estate tax and tourist charges (4 Czech crowns per person per night)<sup>10</sup>. On the whole, the contribution makes some 40,000 CZK per year, which does not enable any investment in the village. Moreover, a larger part goes back to the foreign needs such as rubbish collection and a local road repair. Lipno, for instance, boasts of a new square with 'plentiful cosy cafés, decorative greenery, and promenade pavements', as the local elite put it. Their opinion certifying that tourism is the right road to success and happy future is, however, frequently contradicted by a whole host of critics, both locals<sup>11</sup> and outsiders, who largely point to the excessive concentration of the tourism industry in one place which makes an entirely unnatural impression of the landscape (Horáková 2010a: 71-72; Horáková 2012).

## 7. Synthesis of research findings

Let us now synthesize the research findings and turn to the questions posed in the Introduction. The first question to assess is **who sets the stage for the rural development in these sites**. As has been stated, the projects of Dutch villages were joint initiatives between Dutch investors

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<sup>10</sup> [www.vidochov.cz/soubory/12007.pdf](http://www.vidochov.cz/soubory/12007.pdf), accessed on June 27, 2012

<sup>11</sup> Among those who find the place tasteless, ugly and non-aesthetic are the displaced elderly people.

and local municipal representatives that mediated the sell-off of the land (both in possession of the municipality, or in private ownership) and supervised the construction of the resorts. So, the local involvement on the part of individual owners who sold the land was directed purely along economic interests, whereas the municipal representatives' motivations in conversion and management of public lands were mostly broader (stemming from the concept of tourism-as-development) pursuing the aim to revitalize (or even rescue) the locality. No local referenda took place in order to gain broader consensus (or refusal) for such developmental projects.

The other question deals with the problematic side of the rural development in the research sites: **what kind of tensions, dilemmas and challenges does the process produce?** Tourism is usually described as having three major types of impacts (both positive and negative) on many of the places which tourists visit (Cooper et al. 1993). These effects are economic, environmental, and socio-cultural. Unlike some of its environmental and socio-cultural impacts, economic effects of tourism are mainly considered to be beneficial. David Harcombe (1999) mentions the following: the generation of foreign exchange, the creation of new job and employment opportunities, the stimulation of trade, income and entrepreneurship - especially in the service and small business sectors, the provision of new infrastructure which is available for non-tourism uses, increased regional development - particularly in isolated areas, greater tax revenues permitting greater government spending - or reduced taxes on other activities, and the operation of what is called the multiplier effect. (Table 2 shows varied occurrence of some of the positive economic effects cited by Harcombe).

Research site	Stárkov	Stupná	Lipno n. Vltavou
creation of new job opportunities	4	2	8
stimulation of trade, income, entrepreneurship	3	1	7
provision of new infrastructure	5	0	18
greater tax revenues	1	0	5

Tab 2. Positive economic effects based on interviews with residents (18 in Stárkov, 16 in Stupná, 22 in Lipno) in the research sites between 2008 and 2010 (frequency of residents' replies).

Other positive phenomena mentioned occasionally by residents included: increased attractiveness of their village (Stárkov, Stupná), reduced entrance fees to the in-door swimming pool (Lipno), newly built infrastructure for children (Stárkov), reconstruction of a historical monument (Stárkov), repair of a local road, utilization of formerly undeveloped land (Lipno, Stárkov, Stupná-Vidochov), rejuvenation of demographic profile (Lipno), and improvement of residential housing (Lipno).

Although travel and tourism studies tend to emphasise the beneficial features of tourism's economic impacts, there are some negative consequences also to consider. These are: leakages of expenditure out of the local economy, increased propensities to import, opportunity costs, displacement effects, over-dependence on tourism, inflation and higher land values, seasonality issues, over-reliance on expatriat labour, creation of new or extra costs, and problems over foreign capital investment. (Table 3 shows varied occurrence of some of the negative economic effects cited by Harcombe).

Research site	Stárkov	Stupná	Lipno n. Vltavou
leakages	5	7	19
over-dependence on tourism	2	8	20
inflation and higher land values	3	2	22
creation of new or extra costs	4	15	16

Tab 3. Negative economic effects based on interviews with residents (18 in Stárkov, 16 in Stupná, 22 in Lipno) in the research sites between 2008 and 2010 (frequency of residents' replies).

No adequate evaluation of tourism can be based simply on economic criteria. Tourism as a highly complex system involves not only economic, but also political, environmental, social and cultural aspects, therefore we can hardly expect the impact to be uniformly good or bad. Tourism seems to generate consistently ambivalent or contradictory assessment (Crick 1989).



The benefits and risks depend on the nature of recreational localities projects and the target destinations. Moreover, there is an urgent need to take into account the public sector, the private sector, non-profit organizations and the residents in order to design sustainable tourism strategies (Font and Ahjem 1999). International amenity based tourism projects in all the research sites were predominantly top-down initiatives, largely ignoring bottom-up, community-based partnerships. Rural communities under study were faced with a problem of radical change that distorted rural landscape, shattered the balance of local social organization and transformed social relations. Lack of empowerment at a local level coincides with respondents' reactions articulating mostly negative effects of tourist commodification upon the host society. Apart from the economic weaknesses mentioned above (see Table 2) the respondents frequently mention increased traffic and noise, deterioration of local roads, congestion of public space, mess and vandalism, problems with rubbish collection, loss of authentic rural atmosphere, and inappropriate even ugly architecture of recreational localities, among others.

The concept of tourism as development has definitely failed in revitalizing Stupná: failure of the provision of public services means a lack of trust in collective action, which results in weak social capital of the local community. It appears to be relatively beneficial to a local community in the other localities. By and large, positive developmental trends have been recorded in Lipno. Tourism helped revitalize the social and economic life of the village. Moreover, it averted the population decline. It also enhanced chances to modernise residential housing. From this point of view, Lipno may serve as an example of successful adaptation to the changing conditions. According to its representatives, Lipno is the only municipality in which the project of international amenity based tourism has fulfilled the original expectations. However, all the recreational localities, irrespective of their size and development have had a negligible or zero impact on the local community facilities (primary infrastructure). Instead, secondary infrastructure has become predominant, especially in Lipno, which resulted in 'touristification' of the village and landscape. The landscape has been degraded to mere scenery for a stage composed of recreational amenities and activities (Nožičková 2009).

Negative consequences underlying rapid changes were predominantly perceived by those who either have not adapted to or do not benefit from the new situation: the rejection of an old system, workplaces, service and social networks have not yet been fully compensated by the creation of new networks in their place. The costs in Lipno (and partly Stárkov) include a rise in the prices of food, rents, local houses, and community services. Benefits seem to be distributed disproportionately among the local population. Increased social and economic stratification, particularly between those who have and those who have not, helped to reinforce the symbolic boundaries between tourist spaces and local places. Another fault line runs between those who own and operate tourism facilities and those who are only service providers. The boundaries are also intensified by the increasing breakdown of the old socio-spatial patterns epitomized, for instance, by the depopulation of the Lipno village centre and the subsequent dispersal of the old residents, particularly pensioners, who were 'offered' to vacate their houses for recreational tourism, to the newly built row houses on the village periphery, even 'beyond the old Lipno'.

The assumption this paper worked with has revolved around **the inherently ambivalent and contested relationship between 'hosts' and 'guests'** in post-communist rurality due to the ways rural space is constructed and reconstructed. In its initial stages, hosts have partially learned to accommodate the demands of international nature-based tourism. But as the expectations were not fulfilled (empty promises of investing in the construction of a pub and a shop in Stupná; a low rate of employment of locals in jobs directly or indirectly linked to tourism in Stárkov; a failure to place limits on further construction of houses, e.g. a broken promise not to build more than twenty-two houses in Stárkov<sup>12</sup>), the barriers sharpening the differences between the local population and foreign tourists have started to mount. The deepening social distance has been enhanced by differing social, economic and cultural backgrounds of the foreigners: by their above-average income; their 'otherness'; the language

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<sup>12</sup> Dutch investor is planning to build another 33 houses in Stárkov. The project is being assessed by the regional department of environment at the moment.

difference; their ability of being mobile which is in sharp contrast to the local immobility (e.g. in Stupná); an increased tendency to prohibit the locals from entering the recreational area (in Stárkov).

The social difference is confirmed above all by the **spatial segregation** between the tourist resorts and the local community. It is in fact the physical distance between the local communities and 'Dutch villages' that conditions social relations in all the rural areas. The resorts were constructed with the aim to avoid locals' interference and to direct the tourists' gaze (Urry 2002) to reach the idyllic rurality rather than local social practices. The segregation between 'hosts' and 'guests' has contributed to the strengthening of 'us' and 'them' categories. A lack of mutual interaction results in perpetuating collective cultural stereotypes. In general, Czechs are perceived as more or less backward and less civilized whereas Dutch are portrayed by the locals as the ones who are extremely thrifty,<sup>13</sup> non-communicative and self-contained, and largely contemptuous of Czech 'natural hospitality'. The initial mixture of local community resentment and excitement has turned into feelings and practices of indifference towards tourists. Equally, foreign guests appear indifferent to the social reality of their hosts, which leads to the promotion of mutual ignorance, rather than understanding.

Can this social organization characterized by a low level of interaction between hosts and guests be instrumental in forging viable rural development? Understanding development requires recognition of at least the two basic requisites. First, that the dynamic of social continuity and change is essential. Only those local communities that are simultaneously capable of acknowledging of the past and opening to the new opportunities of the present can remain viable. In other words, willingness and capacity of blending the old and the new is vital for the future rural development (Árnason et al. 2009). Second, that the individual or the community are the key actors in development processes. Rural development has to be confined to rural local systems; rural development plans have to be organized by the local communities and adapted to specific needs of the local communities. The local institutional framework has to provide the community members with the instruments and the capacity to participate in social and economic change (Cecchi 2001: 235). The new activities cannot lead to the exclusion and silencing of the local community; such a situation endangers to disrupt the social relations. Thus, the relation between the external resources and the local community is a decisive factor of the final outcome of the process of change.

Cause	Effect
artificially reinforced spatial boundaries	physical and symbolic segregation between hosts and guests
low level of interaction between hosts and guests	reinforcing stereotypes; feelings of mutual indifference
construction of uniform-looking recreational units	undesirable effects on the environment and host community; distortion of rural settlement and landscape
failure to look at tourism development from the destination side	passivity of locals

Tab 4. Most serious socio-cultural effects experienced by the respondents in all the research sites (cause-effect).

## 8. Conclusion

Preliminary research outcomes verify the thesis that successful rural development has to comprise both continuity and social change. Furthermore, successful rural development must comprise both the bottom-up and top-down projects; that is the representation of the plurality of collective identities. In sum, the re-casting of the rural resources as countryside capital to suit the needs of rural tourism has not been beneficial to local population for a number of reasons. First, as the findings show the international tourism projects were predominantly local authorities' initiatives that included top-down land-use planning and management and decision-making processes, instead of community-based partnerships. Little was understood about the value of the rural landscape as both a direct and indirect component of countryside capital

<sup>13</sup> A frequent saying has it that 'what a Scotsman drops, a Dutchman picks up'.

assets. The view that investment in rural tourism is only beneficial if it seeks to maintain countryside capital has not been taken in account either. Local governing bodies have ignored the local needs. Public decision makers did not recognize the diversity of societal demands, and locals failed to vocalize their preferences.

Second, the societal makeup of the rural regions has undergone too radical changes in a very short time period. Recurring arrivals of a great number of foreign guests (though it may be seasonal and thus irregular, as is the case, for instance, in Stupná) have threatened the balance of local social organization and led to imbalance in distribution of the assets. Economic, social and cultural differences between the 'hosts' and 'guests' are enhanced by physical segregation that results in 'culture of indifference.'

Third, prevalence of external investment in international rural tourism development is wreaking havoc on countryside capital assets. Due to a drastic impact on rural resources, countryside capital has declined. In all the research sites countryside capital has undergone so-called creative destruction which has led to the distortion of the rural landscape. Though the exterior architecture of the international resorts appears to fit the rural theme it lacks cohesion into the surrounding rural landscape and tends to give rise to a 'new countryside' that largely suits the category of urbanized guests.

The question whether 'Dutch villages' brought more tangible and intangible negative or positive outcomes for the local communities sounds premature as the research is still in progress. Nor can we easily predict the future development of the localities under study. It will depend on numerous unforeseeable circumstances: on the existing experience of both foreign real estate owners and tourists; on the political and economic landscape in Czech business environment (e.g. the rate of inflation and land value) and regulatory measures: for example frequent changes in the Czech tax systems, including volatility in property tax; on the willingness of foreign investors to purchase other real estates, etc. Yet, certain future trends could be drawn from the concept of the destination lifecycle. The basic idea of Butler's 1980 Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model is that a destination begins as a relatively unknown and visitors initially come in low numbers due to poor access and limited services. This phase is labelled as Exploration. Development starts when some companies decide to cater for those tourists' needs. With time, local and international companies invest in tourism-related facilities, which means, that the place has been adapted to the newcomers. This is commonly known as commoditisation of tourism resources (Cohen 1988). The next stage – Stagnation – happens when tourist arrivals are too rapid: such a process can either spur technological developments or infrastructure improvements, which leads to Rejuvenation, or it can cause negative effects such as congestion and unsustainable development. In turn, this makes some tourists explore other places, leaving behind a non-fashionable resort (Font and Ahjem 1999). The result is Decline.

We are able to apply Butler's model on the recreational localities under study as they have been in operation for some 8 - 13 years. They have gone through some qualitative and quantitative changes, namely the construction of primary (to a lesser extent) and secondary infrastructure, the expansion of public service sector (especially in Lipno), changes in guests' recreational behaviour due to the economic and financial crisis, changes in hosts' behaviour to guests, restricting accessibility of recreational localities for the locals (especially in Stárkov). Stárkov currently occurs in the phase of stagnation due to the long-term interruption of further construction of the recreational area. Stupná can be placed on the boundary between consolidation and stagnation as the construction of the recreational area has already been finished. Lipno is currently undergoing dynamic changes, typical of enlarging the existing recreational localities and building both primary and secondary infrastructure. Thus, it occurs in the interface between the novel phase of development and the second stage of stagnation (cf. Nožičková 2009).

Western customers are accustomed to purchasing products tailored to their needs, holidays included. Only those destinations that adapt their products to what tourists want will survive (Font and Ahjem 1999). Moreover, the destinations, facing fierce competition in a globalised market, will have to increasingly emphasise distinct characteristics of localities which may

antagonize certain segments of the local population (especially those who belong to the 'have-nots') and increase social polarization. Further research on countryside capital assets and rural tourism needs to investigate the social processes that enhance community empowerment, including various components of capital assets, in more detail. Research also needs to address other niche rural tourism markets, such as that of day visitors, and other rural entrepreneurs in the research areas. In the future, it will be necessary to conduct constant monitoring and measurement of residents' perceptions through survey questionnaires, focus groups, etc. Finally, a special value will be a comparative dimension as the case studies are not a set of isolated areas but a set of thematic studies which draw on the same core argument.

## Acknowledgement

This text was made possible thanks to the support of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, grant number 404/12/1040.

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