

'Space-lore and Place-lore' welcomes you to the conference:

# Rural and Small-town Communities

## Local Heritage and Identities in an Urbanising World

**November 29-30, 2021**

Södertörn University, Stockholm

## Conference Agenda

### Organising Partners



Institute of Ethnology  
and Cultural Anthropology  
University of Warsaw



Institute of Ethnology  
Czech Academy of Sciences

### Day 1

Monday, November 29, 2021

10.00 - 17.00

**10.00 - 11.00 Welcome and Coffee**

**11.00 - 12.00 Keynote Reading through peripheries: Developing an agenda for rural research**  
*Angelika Sjöstedt, Mid Sweden University*

### **13.00 - 13.30 “A woman was home alone“: A case study of polar bear narratives from Pistilfjörður**

*Alice Bower (University of Iceland)*

#### **HYBRID SESSION**

Folk legends of “real life“ events can tell us about much more than the event itself. They shine light on attitudes, beliefs and values held by those who tell them. In this case study of narratives within one North Iceland community, I explore how folk ideas, beliefs and narrative motifs have been imposed on accounts of visits from polar bears from 1918 to the present day. Through this analysis, I aim to challenge the boundaries between popular history and folk narrative, as well as provide insights into the role of factors such as gender, humour, identity and notions of the “other“ in the legend-making process within this community. The sources subjected to analysis are diverse in nature and span a period of over 100 years. They include interviews taken as part of fieldwork in the area during the summer of 2020, accompanied by walking ethnography in the now-uninhabited area of Langanes. Through comparative analysis of the narrative sources, I have observed how these tales assume characteristics of pre-established storytelling traditions. Some motifs are identifiable in accounts spanning the whole period studied whereas other attitudes and beliefs expressed are confined to a particular time or place. In some instances, the structure of the narrative is altered over time as narrators show a preference for humour and absurdity.

### **13.30 - 14.00 Visiting Auntie Ilonka: Virtual Homecoming to a Vojvodina Hungarian Village** *Krisztina*

*Racz, University of Belgrade*

The presentation and the paper aim at exploring forms of localized identities among Hungarian speakers in Vojvodina, Serbia through the discourse analysis of two Facebook pages. The two pages, whose titles can roughly be translated as Auntie Ilonka and University in Front of the Store, circulate content in the form of memes that build on a rural Vojvodinian Hungarian identity. Using a vernacular that is both rural, stigmatized as “peasant“, “uneducated“ and “incorrect“ and hybridized with Serbian phrases, the two pages mimic the form and the content elderly people in Hungarian villages in Serbia use in their speech. Yet, I argue, the aim of the pages is not mere mockery, but the memes and the numerous comments under them serve to recreate an imaginary home for the participants. The need for this recreation emerge as a result of social change in Vojvodina Hungarian society. First, it follows a generational shift, because few of younger and middle-aged Hungarians from Vojvodina still use the dialect captured in the Facebook pages. Second, the vernacular used in the memes is also class-based, and vanishing with urbanization and the social mobility of the younger generation. Third, the loss of the dialect and the cultural references in the Facebook pages is connected to a demographic change: as Hungarians from Vojvodina have been leaving the region in large numbers in the past decades, fora such as Auntie Ilonka and University in Front of the Store are becoming a virtual space of identity, home and nostalgia.

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### **14.00 - 14.30 The affective atmosphere of rural life and digital healthcare: Understanding older persons' engagement in eHealth services**

*Jens Lindberg, Umeå University*

The implementation of digital healthcare technologies – eHealth – is presented as a solution to increasing costs, demographic changes and quality issues in rural healthcare. This article is exploring the emotional aspects of eHealth for older persons in rural areas. What is the ‘affective atmosphere’ of rural life and digital healthcare? How is it affected by cultural notions on rural space, ageing, healthcare and digital technology? And how do this shared affective mode influence older persons’ engagement in eHealth services? The empirical material of the study consists of 19 semi

structured interviews with persons aged 61-85 living in rural communities and that have used digital health technologies.

The results suggest that there are strong negatively charged emotions connected to rural eHealth: resignation,

reduced citizenship, defiance and a sense that there is no choice. Study participants expected physical healthcare to disappear in rural areas and felt that they needed to use eHealth services to keep up with the future. These emotions were impelled by shared understandings of societal changes in rural life and society as a whole.

The affective atmosphere of rural life and digital healthcare seemed to encourage study participants into engaging in eHealth services (rather than not engaging). Negatively charged emotions were often stronger motivations for engagement than more positively charged emotions. The affective atmosphere also helped to downplay concerns about rural life and digital healthcare in ways so that negatively charged emotions were co-constructed with positively charged emotions, like hope, gratitude and pride. Against this backdrop, eHealth was framed as an opportunity. This made study participants embrace implementation of eHealth services and accept territorial inequalities in access to physical healthcare.

### **15.00 - 15.30 Rural and small communities responding to wildfires**

*Maria Vallström, Södertörn University*

We investigate three villages strongly affected by the large and numerous wildfires in Sweden in 2018, in the regions most affected by them (Dalarna, Gävleborg and Jämtlands län). By taking a local perspective, we have been able to grasp the local collective responses and mobilisation from different angles, interviewing farmers, hunters, landowners, babysitters and coffeemakers, enterprises and individuals involved in this very intense period. They have described the cohesiveness and importance of local geographical knowledge and proximity in time, networks of social and economic relations that were activated in the local community and how this mobilization connected to external actors of different levels in society.

For this panel, we would like to discuss the paradox of volunteeriness (*frivillighet*) in relation to the question of being paid (*ersättning*) revealing the question of the core of “help”; what are the reasons and motivational forces for it, how do others perceive help and what if the help serves another purpose than getting closer to the common goal of putting the fire out? Can voluntarily work be both a blessing and a burden? What is at risk if voluntary work gets paid, and what if it doesn't? Should the state be unaffected economically by crisis in rural Sweden and what will be expected the next time wildfires occur?

Addressing another theme in this panel, we would also like to present results about everyday-practices affecting people in these communities, on the boundary between what is considered valued work that should be paid, and other tasks such as coordinating resources, managing social media, babysitting and food preparations, which in our material is often done by women.

### **15.30 - 16.00 Korčanica and the absent state: How has the memory of socialism changed in rural Bosnia?** *Mišo Kapetanović, University of St. Gallen*

How does the rural population remember socialism once the process of socialist modernization has been interrupted? The paper explores the life and politics of a rural community, Lušci Palanka, located in the northwest of the country, and their relationship towards the socialist heritage. Once deeply subjected to socialist modernization and vocally anti-fascist, the village was exemplary for socialist development, which used memory of its anti-fascist struggle in World War Two to advance community development. The Korčanica memorial zone was built at the end of socialist modernism on a grandiose scale. Its function was to commemorate the glorious past and generate economic activity by attracting Yugoslav tourists and providing employment. Today, after the end of socialism and the Bosnian war, the community is decimated, economically deprived, highly migratory, with strong support for (Serbian)

nationalist politics. The memorial zone was pillaged and neglected as post-socialist nationalism replaced socialist and anti-fascist tradition. In exploring this change, the paper departs from the rupture in memory culture. The so-called “culture of forgetting,” visible in the negligence of socialist memorials, is often simplistically explained through the rising of populist politics and the absence of the post-socialist state. Instead, it examines the agency of the community in narrating and representing the struggle regarding the aesthetics of late socialist modernism. The asymmetries in class relationships and aesthetics then could explain the lack of enthusiasm today.

### **16.00 - 16.30 The role of ethnic marketing in national identity formation and local tourism in Seclerland**

*Cecilia Sandor, Corvinus University of Budapest*

My field-research topic is the connection between ethnic branding, consumption and regional identity in Szeklerland (Romania). The collapse of the communist system (1989) left behind a general insecurity. As an re-industrialization process a brand new beer brewery had been built in year 2014 in middle of Transilvania, in Harghita county in the village of Csíkszentsimon. In connection with the Manufacture’s marketing communication it is of high priority to mention, that the production and the communication of the products is adjusted to the Szekler ethnical group. It highlights certain features in terms of the local tradition, it evokes earlier events, and it draws on a past symbol system, the remembrance of the cultural heritage. The makers created, invented a tradition initiative, that – underpinned with historical factors – they united with the already existing minority nation concept.

The beer factory primarily is an economic investment and a representative element of local tourism. On the other hand, the globalizational process and the mobility, as the road leading towards multiculturalism, revived more and more the revealing of the ethnicity and the identity in the social, political and cultural relationships and in this growing nation awareness, in the process of the strengthening of the identity policies, the Csíki Beer as a par excellence national product also functions as a political and economic tool, in one word, it visualizes a kind of patriotism.

In my presentation, I firstly argue about the fact that the identity symbols, the traditions, and the creation of myths connected to Seclerland, through folklorization are local-regional identity formations and became part of consumer brands. The etno-brand built up by Csíki Manufacture doesn’t only take the elements of secler identity, but it also becomes an identity marker. The “Csíki”, the “Csíki-ness” although is a geographically existing and limitable unit, here it is not concretely tangible, but a frame put together of historical traditions, ethnical relational elements and of collective representation.

### **16.30 - 17.00 Concluding Discussion, Day 1**

*Jiří Woitsch, Czech Academy of Sciences*

## **Day 2**

**Tuesday, November 30, 2021**

**09.00 - 15.30**

### **09.00 - 09.30 Recap of Day 1 and Coffee**

*Maria Vallström, Södertörn University*

### **09.30 - 10.00 Indigenous community-based eco-tourism & socio-environmental justice in South America**

*Rickard Lalander & Juliana Porsani, Södertörn University*

Based on the understanding of Community-Based Ecotourism/CBET as a livelihood model and tourism form aimed at promoting changes that are valuable to involved communities, this paper examines whether, how and why indigenous CBET experiences yield outcomes that are locally perceived as socio-culturally and environmentally fair. To unveil underlying conditions and factors that link CBET to social and environmental changes locally deemed as inclusive and equitable, this study employs a decolonial political ecology and socio-environmental justice framework. From a bottom-up perspective, variations and challenges in CBET projects in rural Brazilian and Ecuadorian indigenous communities are examined and problematized, drawing on initial ethnographic findings from the Jaquiera community of the Pataxó people in the Brazilian north-eastern coast and the Tsáchila people of the tropical lowlands of north western Ecuador. Our study highlights some central preliminary findings, namely that 1) intersectional approaches attentive to ethnicity, class, and gender are critical to the understanding of the experienced values from CBET at the community level and therefore to implications of CBET to socio-environmental justice; and 2) CBET in communities with a strong sense of agency can contribute to the assertion over their territorial claims and culture, in common struggle for formal recognition of their ethno-territorial rights. This dual assertion unfolds as indigenous communities strengthen the control over their ancestral territory while also engaging in processes of interculturality vis-à-vis tourists. Thus, by “othering” their own selves in their own terms, simultaneously reshaping the perceptions of indigeneity and territoriality, and asserting their legitimacy over traditionally occupied lands.

### **10.00 - 10.30 Small towns, mass tourism: “Local gaze” in the management of UNESCO-related tourism**

*Terezie Lokšová, Masaryk University*

Even though the negative effects of mass tourism are gaining increasing attention, the label of UNESCO World Heritage Site still implies promises of economic gains for the locality. Small towns may especially be vulnerable to an entire range of effects due to predominant orientation towards tourism and services, the size of the community, etc. Conditions specific for the rural context, e.g. informal communication and personal relations, non-urban forms of governance, and obduracy of local habits and tastes can further enact how the incoming tourism and its impacts will look like.

Our presentation is based on interdisciplinary fieldwork (sociology, architecture, media studies), interviews, media and strategic document analysis (2019-2020) in Telč, a UNESCO-listed small Czech town with circa 5000 inhabitants. The main aim of the presentation is to focus on different types of narration about tourism. First, we will show how the particular narratives dis/enable the possible activities of the municipality or other participants, and second, how they involve not only the practices but also the self-understanding of the local identity in a social milieu of the small town.

We will (1) explore how the local self-perceptions and perceptions of tourism (“locals’ gaze”) influence the decision making and meaning-making of the local actors; (2) raise the questions of translation and transfer of expert knowledge towards the local stakeholders and (3) suggest that the ways how the city copes with the tourist narratives are essential to the small town as the whole and not just for the particular segment of the tourist industry.

### **10.30 - 11.00 What is the price of (intangible) culture?**

*Janja Kovač, Museum of Međimurje Čakovec*

Since 2015, I work as curator of ethnographic collections in the Museum of Međimurje in Čakovec (Croatia). This regional museum concentrates on the area of Međimurje, a rural area with a high impact of urban elements. In the focus of my work is something that we today call intangible heritage but only 15 years ago it was being described as crafts, skill or ways of life. This proposal is based on the experience that I have obtained through my work.

In the first part of the text I will talk about the project entitled Reconstruction and revitalization of the Old Town in Čakovec to the Museum of Intangible Heritage, of which I am part. The aim of this project, which is co-financed by ESF, is to create a museum of intangible heritage in the renovated parts of the Museum of Međimurje. One of its two permanent exhibitions will be dedicated to the items of intangible heritage of Međimurje inscribed in national or international intangible heritage lists. This project is the starting point of this text due to its measurable cost and projected outcomes; these data are important to experts in the field of economy, law and politics.

The second part will combine the conclusions of the first part with the data obtained from the fieldwork carried out with the bearers of intangible heritage. I will analyze the case of two women: the first among them is one of only two active pottery makers in Međimurje, and the other one is one of the last three gingerbread makers in Međimurje. Both of them used to be craftswomen but today they are bearers of intangible heritage. Something that was once a rural craft, today is on the list of an international institution such as the UNESCO.

In the final part of the text I will focus on the following questions: How did those women cope with the change of nature of their businesses? Is the term “intangible heritage” important to them? What role does it play? What is expected of me as a curator working on their territory? What is the relation between profit and transfer of knowledge? Is (intangible) culture only a commodity today? And if it is, it's that wrong?

### **11.30 - 12.00 Mining vs. natural heritage: Local perceptions about development and its manifestations. Case study of the rural region of Tran (Bulgaria)**

*Ivaylo Markov, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*

#### **HYBRID SESSION**

The tensions between industrial projects and nature protection in combination with ecological tourism as ways of local development is not new; it continues to be a vital topic of economic, political, ecological and social debate. In this paper, I will address this issue based on a case study in the rural region of Tran in Bulgaria. The region is located in a border area (close to the Bulgarian-Serbian border) which during the socialist period in Bulgaria (1944–1989) was under strong control; it remained a peripheral industrially undeveloped area. However, the region has preserved its pristine nature and landscapes; the Natura 2000 network covers most of its territories. Thus, during the last two decades natural resources have been conceptualized as heritage and an element of local cultural identity. Preserved nature is seen as a possibility for better local development, especially through ecotourism.

On the other hand, the gold mine “Zlata” had operated in the region from the late 1930s till the mid-1970s, when it was closed down because of the depletion of the gold ore. In 2004, however, a private investor had started a new prospect for gold and silver in the former mine and in the adjacent area, and in 2013 an official intention of investment was made. Soon in the media, the region of Tran was proclaimed to be the “Bulgarian Klondike”, also promising the local population and authorities better economic development. In recent years, an intense local collision emerges due to these two ways of development. Local people draw on their inner convictions, life goals and trajectories when assessing the mining project and nature protection as well. They use various strategies and practices to support and manifest their choice and position: resistance, protests, lobbying, circumvention, bargain, cooperation with administrations, investor and/or NGOs; past experience also matter – locals use their memories about the former mine “Zlata” as legitimate narratives or as arguments in discussions in support or against a particular project.

**13.00 - 13.30 Concluding Discussion, Day 2**

*Jiří Woitsch, Czech Academy of Sciences*

**13.30 - 14.30 Networking Activities in Interest Groups**

**15.00 Closing Comments**

**Scientific Committee**

*Maria Vallström, Department of Ethnology, Södertörn University, Stockholm Jiří Woitsch, Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague Hubert Wierciński, Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw Paul Sherfey, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies at Södertörn University, Stockholm*

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