

**Keynote text by:**

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**Tending to tourism**

Tourism's role in thriving and declining communities

**Abstract**

This keynote will focus on rural communities and the role tourism plays in their economy and socio-cultural development. Tourism's impact, both negative and positive, will be outlined placing emphasis on the ways tourism development can work for community empowerment. Controversies in tourism development will be investigated related to the geographies of production and consumption of tourism in a rural setting.

The keynote is conceptually inspired by post-structural theorising of spaces and places. Ruralities in this sense are simultaneously an effect of gathering deep-seated emotions and experiences and an open-ended and forever unfinished story. Due to their irreducibility a rurality can be shared and thus through tourism marketing and promotion the rural experience can be presented as a tourism product recognising the tourist as an author of his or her own experiences. Recognising the tourist as this author commands the attitude of respect that is a necessary precondition to any ethical notions of hospitality, which is a prerequisite for tourism's role in community empowerment. Tending to tourism as an ever unfolding story thus leads to an understanding of community resilience in the face of change and risks and how these can be managed in just and responsible ways.

Dear fellow scholars of ruralities and all things peripheral,

First and foremost I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to address this conference in such a formal way. Making space for tourism as a keynote theme is also worth a special recognition and I hope to address in this talk issues of tourism in the rural that I perceive as of special importance. However seeing that this is an academic venue I feel it inappropriate to reel of just basic facts and figures, along with identified issues of contention that could then underpin some sound policy advice for tourism development in the rural, as is so often expected of those researching tourism matters. That I will save for the parliamentarians. Here I would like to address issues of tourism development in the rural conceptually. This I feel is of special importance as it will provide us with tools for understanding the rural and tourism as part and parcel thereof. Basically I will argue that through tending to the elements of this particular understanding we become better equipped to provide said policy advice later on.

In the following I would like to address three questions that can help us understand tourism's role in thriving and declining communities. First I want to define the rural, then provide a new way of imagining it and finally ask who can place such images in our heads and to what avail.

### **What is the rural?**

Being a geographer I find maps always particularly useful to answer such basic questions (KLIKK). This map we all know. It is the area in which grants through the Northern Periphery Programme of the European Union can be meted out. And with that I can answer my question? Right? Here it is! The Rural, implicitly

peripheral, but still most assuredly rural. But no, not really. Just like the borders of Europe have been hammered out mostly with an iron fist, these borders too have their rationale. The geography of this particular region is bounded by and I quote (KLIKK) “[s]parseness of population, rurality, insularity, harsh climate and peripherality”.<sup>1</sup>

The nature of the region’s rurality, insularity and peripherality has to do with sparseness of population along with harsh climatic and weather conditions. Through being sparsely populated, infrastructure development lags behind and thus the region is difficult to get to in terms of physical travel and/or time. This however, leads to the fact that these regions hold most of Europe’s remaining wilderness areas, where nature is conceived as pristine and untouched. This is obviously a great tourism attractor in our modern day and age of growing environmental awareness and concern.

So understanding the rural becomes inevitably drawn from grappling with; a) the boundedness of a region, and b) the activities that in effect sustain that bounding, however conceptualised and understood. Talking about a region is thus (KLIKK)

... a historically specific construction composed of the discourses and realms of social relations, meanings and nature in a specific space.<sup>2</sup>

Jarkko Saarinen talks about the transformation process of any destination and the multiplicity of ideas at any time of what a destination is and could be. The

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.northernperiphery.eu/en/content/show/&tid=178&print=1>

<sup>2</sup> Saarinen, J. 2004: ‘Destinations in Change’: The Transformation Process of Tourist Destinations. *Tourist Studies*, 4, pp. 161-179, here p. 174.

boundedness and the activities that bind draw attention to the specific ways in which a destination or region is maintained, which will inevitably be a starting premise for any thinking about the rural. To turn this sentence around; questions around what the rural could and should be inevitably revolve around how the rural can be formed, who the players can be, and the potential dangers (or opportunities) such rural development presents, be it for contemporary tourism development or any other. However, and I will come back to this in the end, tourism development is inherently conflict ridden and this should be cause for concern when tourism is pegged as a regional development option.

In terms of the boundary and the activities that bind, regional studies provide a way to conceptualise and explore in a more inquisitive manner the constitution of the rural. As made clear in the introduction the rural, as per the NPP area at least, is conceived of and named peripheral. Peripherality is fundamentally geographical, inherently relational thus connoting power and inequality and multi scalar. What this means is that in order to define and understand something which could be called rural, it needs to be demarcated geographically, as has been made clear. Moreover, the context for the activities that sustain that bounding need to be seen as opposed to and related to some core and when approaching the periphery from the core, the causal patterns constituting the periphery accumulate.

(KLIKK) Drawing on the well-known core-periphery formulations of the German geographer Walter Christaller<sup>3</sup> and later twists by Mehretu, Pigozzi & Sommers,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Christaller, W. 1933: *Die zentralen Orte in SüdDeutschland*. Jena: Gustav Fischer.

<sup>4</sup> Mehretu, A., Pigozzi, B.W. & Sommers, L.M. 2000:. Concepts in Social and Spatial Marginality. *Geografiska Annaler B*, 82(2), pp. 89-101.

Dieter Müller<sup>5</sup> framed the peripherality of the ‘last wilderness area of Europe’ with four conditions of marginality;

- contingent; i.e. those margins dependent upon the transport of people, goods and services from elsewhere,
- systemic, i.e. how the historical ordering of society, its economies and peoples, has marginalised certain regions. Colonialism being a prime example here,
- collateral, in regions marginalised through dependence on regions suffering from either or both of the above,
- and lastly leveraged, i.e. those regions marginalised as economic activity relocates with technological or other innovation developments.

Each and every rural destination, like Europe’s northern periphery, are peripheral as a function of one or more of the four conditions of marginality. These functions result in several characteristics of marginality summarised by Müller having to do with lack of political and economic control, remoteness from centres of activity and decision making, human resource deficit and often resource based economies, which can in a host of ways translate into subjective conditions compounding difficulties in any efforts to alter a spiral of decline, if applicable. These characteristics are outlined in detail by Michael C. Hall<sup>6</sup> and others in terms of tourism, based on the same sources as Müller, (KLIKK) and are well worth a read through.

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<sup>5</sup> Müller, D.K. 2011: Tourism Development in Europe’s “Last Wilderness”: An Assessment of Nature-Based Tourism in Swedish Lapland, in A.A. Grenier & D.K. Müller (eds.), *Polar Tourism: A Tool for Regional Development*. Québec, QC: Presses de l’Université du Québec, pp. 129-153.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, M.C., Harrison, D. Weaver, D. & Wall, G. 2013: Vanishing Peripheries: Does Tourism Consume Places. *Tourism Recreation Research* 38(1), pp. 71–92, here p. 76.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Peripheral Areas for Tourism**

Geographical remoteness	Peripheral areas are geographically remote from mass markets. This not only implies increased transportation costs to and from the core areas but also increased communication costs with suppliers and customers
Lack of effective political and economic control over major decisions affecting well-being	They are particularly susceptible to the impacts of economic globalisation and restructuring through the removal of tariffs and the development of free trade regimes; as well as the political and economic decisions of non-local political institutions and firms
Economic linkages	Internal economic linkages tend to be weaker at the periphery than at the core thereby potentially limiting the ability to achieve high multiplier effects because of the substantial degree of importation of goods and services
Migration flows	Migration flows tend to be from the periphery to the core. This can impact not only the absolute population of a given area but its intangible (social and intellectual) capital as well.
Innovation	Botterill et al. (1997) argued that peripheries tend to be characterised by a comparative lack of innovation as new products tend to be imported rather than developed locally. However, there has been little empirical examination of this issue and even evidence to the contrary (Hall and Williams 2008).
State intervention	Because of the economic difficulties experienced by peripheral regions the national and local state may play a relatively greater interventionist role than in core regions
Information flows	Information flows within the periphery and from the periphery to the core are weaker than those from the core to the periphery. Such information flows may have implications for political and economic decision-making undertaken in core regions as well as broader perceptions of place
Aesthetic values	Peripheral regions often retain high aesthetic amenity values because of being relatively underdeveloped in relation to core areas. Such high natural values may not only serve as a basis for the development of nature-based tourism but may also be significant for other types of tourism and leisure developments, such as that associated with second homes

Source: After Hall and Boyd 2005b; Hall 2007; Müller and Jansson 2007

These conditions form the context in which particular actors in the rural must perform in their acts of binding together the region as e.g. a tourism destination. This context might change with time and regions can move from being peripheral to being more central at particular times and vice versa. It is with this temporal dimension where tourism comes into play at current. The images of the rural as being relatively untouched and attractive as wilderness or nature, however conceived or defined. (KLIKK) The rural defined as the idyll, that can even translate into happiness and a healthier life. The current deep seated precepts about the rural which Paul Cloke<sup>7</sup> defines are today being translated into tourism assets.

<sup>7</sup> Cloke, P. 2003: *Country Visions*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, here p. 1.

But this process of translation intrigues me. What is being picked up and translated? Surely it is not merely the idea of the rural, its defined idyll and some deep-seated early twenty-first century psyche of the Westerner?

As has been outlined above, several factors impact the development of rural areas. All of these represent sedimented relations of other times and other people, other ways of being and doing in that space. The Italian author Italo Calvino in his famous book *Invisible Cities* gives us an idea of these relations which constitute the spaces of the rural (KLIKK):

In Ersilia, to establish the relationships that sustain the city's life, the inhabitants stretch strings from the corners of the houses, white or black or gray or black-and-white according to whether they mark a relationships of blood, of trade, authority, agency.<sup>8</sup>

This formulation draws attention to the ways in which the rural, and any other place for that matter, is embedded in the relations between individuals and a product of ongoing and active mutual engagements between people and their environment.

Thus the rural is not a property that can be amassed, stored or owned, projected through images or branded. It inheres in relations and is thus an effect of practice or how people engage in their social and material relations. The resulting fabric of relations is thus an “arrangement-in-relation-to-each-other that is the result of their being a multiplicity of trajectories” as the geographer Doreen Massey<sup>9</sup> would describe it. Calvino in his Ersilia metaphor, conceives the city as entangles

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<sup>8</sup> Calvino, I. 1997: *Invisible Cities*. London: Verso, here p. 76.

<sup>9</sup> Massey, D. 2005: *For Space*. London: Sage, here p. 111.

of history creating the momentum of the locality or the way in which individuals are moored to the place or develop a sense of belonging. But in the above formulation the existence of a stable community of people with similar aspirations and needs is circumscribed through the focus on practices and the relational politics of the spatial outlined further by Massey (KLIKK) as:

“Neither space nor place can provide a haven from the world. If time presents us with the opportunities of change and (as some would see it) the terror of death, then space presents us with the social in the widest sense: the challenge of our constitutive interrelatedness – and thus our collective implication in the outcomes of that interrelatedness; the radical contemporaneity of an ongoing multiplicity of others, human and non-human; and the ongoing and ever-specific project of the practices through which that sociability is to be configured.”<sup>10</sup>

A sense of belonging is thus not to create an agenda for normative categorisations of who belong how and where, but allows for rural dwelling in the phenomenological sense. With this dwelling perspective in mind a fuller picture of what is brought into play once the relations that constitute the rural become more than merely the social, imaginative or psychological. “the radical contemporaneity of an ongoing multiplicity of others, human and non-human”, is what transforms the very fabric of space, which on the grandest of scales can produce them as peripheral, rural, central or core.

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<sup>10</sup> Massey, D. 2005: *For Space*. London: Sage, here p. 195.

## **A rural topology? (KLIKK)**

Now here is where I want to take you into uncharted conceptual waters of rural theorising. I want to offer new tools to imagine the rural based on the above rumination and want to delve into the realm of cultural topology, drawing on a forthcoming book chapter and article of mine.

Topology, as described by the mathematician Bert Mendelson<sup>11</sup>, is derived from the mathematical theorization of sets, or so called set theory and entails the study of collections of objects with certain prescribed structures. In topology, this structure does not prescribe a one-to-one correspondence between points in a given set. Rather, the correspondence is prescribed by functions that define transformations. A set of points, e.g. on the Earth's surface, are defined by the relations (i.e. functions) that exist between them, that in turn define the space provided for by a given set of points. Through emphasis on functions and thus relationality, a key feature of this topological space is its continuous nature. Well known mathematically demonstrated topological spaces include the Klein bottle, the Möbius strip and the Torus. All share the distinguishing characteristic of one being unable to tell the outside from the inside as they appear infinite or continuous. Namely focusing squarely on relationality rather than fixity, points or essence, we get spaces moving. It can move in closed loops like here, but these are merely the figures mathematics manages to prove. Vladimir Prasolov<sup>12</sup> (KLIKK) provides even more intriguing visual aids on how we can imagine a continuous space, that more over is subject to change. How one can become another without visible tears or breaks as space is continuous. On the grandest of scales the Cambridge mathematician Ian Stewart outlines what a topological

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<sup>11</sup> Mendelson, B. 1990[1962]: *Introduction to Topology*. New York: Dover.

<sup>12</sup> Prasolov, V.V. 1995: *Intuitive Topology*. Ann Arbour: American Mathematical Society.

world of continuity would look like, through the words of his story's protagonist, a space hopper (KLIKK):

“Topologica,’ replied the Space Hopper, ‘the Rubber-sheet Continent, which doesn’t so much drift as stretch ... We have entered the realm of topology, from which rigidity was long ago banished and only continuity holds sway. The land of topological transformations, which can bend-and-stretch-and-compress-and-distort-and-deform’ (he said this all in one breath) “but not tear or break”.<sup>13</sup>

‘Topologica’ is a continuous space of flows and movements that are of differing speeds and intensities, but never as such depart from a singular plane, that of the Earth and us with it.

More complicated shapes and forms like us and a village’s transformation in the rural are obviously difficult to establish mathematically. However, the artist M.C. Escher has provided ‘intriguing visual metaphors for abstract mathematical concepts’<sup>14</sup> such as topological change which was one of his key devices in prints (KLIKK). In Escher’s work topological change manifests in figures of landscapes and phenomena where one is unable to pinpoint the beginning or the end of a particular shape. As the mathematician Bert Mendelson<sup>15</sup> explains: ‘We may therefore describe a continuous function as one that commutes with the operation of taking limits’. Meaning that through continually defining outsides and insides or the limits to any relation, spaces unfold. So back to the activities

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<sup>13</sup> Stewart, I. 2001: *Flatterland. Like Flatland, only more so*. London: MacMillan, here p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> Schattschneider, D. 2010: The Mathematical Side of M.C. Escher. *Notices of the American Mathematical Society*, 57(6), pp. 706-718, here p. 715 and 716.

<sup>15</sup> Mendelson, B. 1990[1962]: *Introduction to Topology*. New York: Dover, here p. 49.

that bind. These are constitutive of regions, places and spaces, the rural and the peripheral, through their “ongoing and ever-specific project of the practices through which that sociability is to be configured” to recap on Doreen’s Massey quote.

Putting this topological understanding of space to use in people’s spatial registers has some limitations. Both Escher’s artwork and the mathematically demonstrated shapes remain observable only online or in printed form. The inherent detachment of viewing these shapes on a sheet of paper or computer screen makes the viewer unaware of how the universe, the Earth and us, are exactly such a continually unfolding space. This is why you are having such a hard time imagining this, but I hope I have helped with the figures here, but there is more help on the way.

Intuitively topology has affinities with the flat ontology arguably underpinning Actor Network Theorising and ideas of ordering in tourism and social theory more broadly. Accordingly, we are at one with the world and all that is. Our agency is as great as any of the inanimate objects we deploy. That which presumably surrounds us is at one with us and there is no higher order or lower order to being. The shape of the world, immediate and at large, depends on the bending-and-stretching-and-compressing-and-distorting-and-deforming anyone or anything can bring about, only with different degrees of force.

Binding is ordering and ordering is the exertion of force. Through force forms deform, change shape and morph into something different and parts change their relation to the whole. From a detached perspective on topological shapes, the operation of defining the inside and the outside is the process by which these

forms take shape. Yet in the world as we know it, detachment is not an option. We are embroiled in this Flatterland, continually trying to figure out the limits of what we perceive and do. What emerges are cultural topologies where ‘the ordering of continuity emerges, sometimes without explicit coordination, in practices of sorting, naming, numbering, comparing, listing, and calculating’<sup>16</sup>, quoting here from an introduction to a recent theme issue of *Theory, Culture and Society* devoted to the topic (KLIKK). The effect of these practices is to introduce new continuities by establishing equivalences or similitudes or through repeated contrasts. Quoting from George Perec’s<sup>17</sup> monumental book on life, all taking place in one Parisian building: “... the element’s existence does not precede the existence of the whole, it comes neither before nor after it, for the parts do not determine the pattern, but the pattern determines the parts: ...” . So sorting, naming, numbering, comparing, listing, and calculating are the operations of defining limits. These are the methods by which we bound spaces to make them comprehensible. These methods cannot be detached from the world in which we find ourselves. Spaces and places being undissected topologies of movements, changing shape through intensities or the forces of us and the Earth. As such the rural is an interface of continuity and change, providing alternative possibilities for connection in time and space.

So here is where we can get empirical. The situated, material and specific ways of ordering relations and introducing new continuities is highly significant ‘for as the Swedish Geographer Gunnar Olsson reminds us, to know is by definition to say that something is something else and be believed when one says it; since

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<sup>16</sup> Lury, C., Parisi, L. and Terranova, T. 2012: Introduction: The Becoming Topological of Culture. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29(4-5), pp. 3-35.

<sup>17</sup> Perec, G. *Life. A User’s Manual*. London: The Harvill Press, here from preamble.

every understanding by necessity is an act of interpretation, it follows that knowledge is always an exercise in translation.<sup>18</sup> The question is: Who translates and thus wields this knowledge under which circumstances?

To sum through some recognised geographical theorising. The space of 'topologica' is where continuous variation affects and provides for intensities that continually deform and destabilise any fixity and order. Or established 'lines of power' quoting from the title of another book by the Swedish Gunnar Olsson.<sup>19</sup> These 'lines of power' prop up the 'power geometries' of any space, to use another well-known metaphor from the geographer Doreen Massey<sup>20</sup> and it is these that need to be unravelled if we are to understand the emergent properties and implications of cultural topologies. Space maybe flat and non-hierarchical, but the world is not and key to having effect resides in the plausibility of your concerns.

### **Who wields the functions?**

So getting down to it and looking into tourism development in the rural. Who translates and thus wields knowledge under which circumstances, is where we can come back to the idyll and images of the rural. Getting away from the everyday, getting in touch with oneself, the family, nature and some kind of originality or authenticity in terms of community are all intriguing aspects of the rural idyll, proving to many why to set up second homes there as I have studied along with several Nordic tourism scholars.

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<sup>18</sup> Olsson, G. 2007: *Abysmal*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, here p. 93.

<sup>19</sup> Olsson, G. 1991: *Lines of Power, Limits to Language*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

<sup>20</sup> Massey, D. 1993 'Power geometry and a progressive sense of place', in J Bird, B Curtis, T Putnam and G Robertson (eds.) *Mapping the Future. Local Cultures, Global Change*. Routledge, London, pp. 59-69.

Those who take up travel to the rural or locals wanting to develop tourism products based on these identified assets, plug into a set of networked relationalities which have been translated into these images. The actors sustaining these relations become active translators, able to creatively engage with these relations and forge or synthesise new meanings, matters and products. In the tourism literature (KLIKK) these become human resource managers, supplier chain managers, and customer relationships procurers, quoting from Shaw and Williams from their article on Knowledge Transfer and Management in Tourism Organisations.<sup>21</sup> Yet I always struggle with this type of celebratory accounts. Seeing rural entrepreneurs in tourism or any other field of business trying to make a living as somehow inherently creative, a lifestyle entrepreneur or somehow in charge of their own destinies downplays the larger dynamics at play and the historical contingency of places and spaces. The tautology of the creativity jargon is also striking as Jamie Peck makes clear (KLIKK)...

So, growth derives from creativity and therefore it is creative that make growth; growth can only occur if the creative come, and the creatives will only come if they get what they want; what the creative want is tolerance and openness, and if they find it, they will come; and if they come, growth will follow

Rather than 'civilising' urban [regional] economic development by 'bringing in culture', creativity strategies do the opposite: they commodify the arts and cultural resources, even social tolerance itself, suturing them

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<sup>21</sup> Shaw, G. and Williams, A.M. 2009: Knowledge transfer and management in tourism organisations: an emerging research agenda. *Tourism Management*, 30(3), pp. 325-335, here p. 333.

as putative economic assets to evolving regimes of urban [place based] competition<sup>22</sup>

So Jamie Peck is telling us that the people, hyped in the tourism literature as creative and able counteract rural decline, are in effect avatars of modern day capitalism generally through commodifying everyday life. Or as Nancy Fraser would have it; ‘unwittingly reflect the institutionalized social order of capitalist societies’.<sup>23</sup> The creativity narrative does lend itself to a different account of the locus of power, placing more in the hands of the individual, yet at the same time there are pervasive and dominant structures channelling constitutive powers. As Slavoj Žižek sees it fit to warn: ‘...the falsity of multiplication resides in the fact that it frees the universal notion of modernity of its antagonism, of the way in which it is embedded in the capitalist system, by relegating this aspect just to one of its historical subspecies ...’<sup>24</sup> Our everyday activities of continually defining limits in order to make sense of our surroundings can hardly find novel expressions in such predefined pathways as commodification, supply chain management, and customer relationships.

The cultural topology to emerge of rural tourism is one dominated by market led interests and this has a very tangible effect on the physical topology of the rural through e.g. defining the pristine and sought after. These individual reinventions in terms of tourism entail orderings. Places, spaces, locals and visitors all become tourism (KLIKK)

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<sup>22</sup> Peck, J. 2005: Struggling with the Creative Class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29(4), pp. 740–770, here p. 757 and 763.

<sup>23</sup> Fraser, N. 2014: Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode. For an expanded conception fo capitalism. *New Left Review*, 89(mar/apr), pp. 55-75, here p. 70

<sup>24</sup> Žižek, S. 2004: *Organs without Bodies. On Deleuze and Consequences*. New York: Routledge, here p. 186

Tourism orders both the spaces of tourism, including the sites that are visited and the spaces of mobility that get them there but also, the tourists themselves. They become self-ordering, self-directed tourists constantly interpellated by, and curious for the places that have been opened up in their name and which become relevant to them.<sup>25</sup>

There is no outside and presumably no inside, one is unable to tell where things begin and where they end and we are ourselves embroiled in this Flatterland, or interpellated to use the words of Franklin, whereby we become produced as subjects proper through a process of making sense of the world.

Yet what I am emphasising is that promoting places, marketing, branding and celebrating creativity, is only seemingly open for plurality and diversification. This is the crux of the issue. The inherent conflict of tourism as a regional development option is simply that (KLIKK)

We are our technologies, our tastes, our lifestyles and brands, our literal spaces. These are constantly under deformation, always a different figure showing, yet having their topological equivalent the structures of meaning comprise us as singular 'rings of string'. Further, like foam, these are fragile and always threatening to burst...This is an imaginary in excess of function that drives media culture, consumer culture, and the knowledge and information society ...<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Franklin, A 2004: Tourism as an ordering: Towards a new ontology of tourism. *Tourist Studies*,4(3), pp. 277–301, here p. 280.

<sup>26</sup> Lash, S 2012: Deforming the Figure: Topology and the Social Imaginary. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29(4-5), pp. 261-287, here p. 271.

The figure of tourism and rural tourism in particular is indeed an imaginary in excess of function, playing into the hands of those who established the lines of communication and transportation and hold the reins to power. Researching the rural needs to reveal the politics at play, the forces acting. Capitalism's aim and ambition in producing new possibilities for profit makes the dynamics of the prevailing cultural topology visible. From there explicit controversies ensue and constitute the rural.

(KLIKK) Yet there is an avenue forward and alternatives can be forged. 'We always need to be several steps ahead of the capitalist mulching machine, reinventing these struggles, devising new language, new political strategies, new ideas, new forms of activism', quoting here from Neil Smith.<sup>27</sup> These reinventions are indeed creative and can be performed by individuals. As Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift<sup>28</sup> explain, 'Of course, we do not reject the analysis of centred power, but we would also wish to defend (even celebrate) practices of alterity that do make a difference by bringing about transitional changes that ultimately might help to change the world and its ways'.

The alternative resides within the controversies. Each of us have a role to play in constituting the rural. We all have a voice placing responsibility and care on each of our shoulders in each moment and every encounter. This responsibility can be talked of in terms of hospitality, generosity, openness or experimentation, but basically revolves around situations that do not lend themselves to straight forward rationalisations or scripted projects of marketing and promotion. As a

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<sup>27</sup> Smith, N. 2005: Neo-Critical Geography, Or, The Flat Pluralist World of Business Class. *Antipode*, 37(5), pp. 887 – 899, here p. 891.

<sup>28</sup> Amin, A and Thrift, N 2007: Commentary. On being political. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers NS*, 32, pp. 112–115, here p. 114.

consequence, politics are everywhere in everything we do, with each and every moment there is 'an endless struggle with the difference of daily existence' engaging space in its own transformation.

The social, hedonic and especially functional benefits from tourism development in the rural allows us to be ahead, inventing new ways of being and doing, which potentially have the power to affect, producing a ripple effect through Topologica destabilising dominant structures. However plausible one finds this scenario, the topological imaginary gives us all a place from which we have the power to affect. The inventory exercise of gauging the context is politically charged as it is imperative that one is believed when one sorts, names, numbers, compares, lists, and calculates. The plausibility of our matters of concern animate the politics of rural development. These are situated politics that lead up to an elaboration on 'non-representing' space<sup>29</sup> and the 'art of the political'<sup>30</sup> that can allow tourism development to become a responsible act of empowerment. It is to this we need to tend when dealing with the rural.

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<sup>29</sup> Thrift, N. 2008: *Non-Representational Theory. Space, Politics, Affect*. Routledge, Abingdon.

<sup>30</sup> Amin, A. and Thrift, N. 2013: *Arts of the Political. New Openings for the Left*. Duke University Press, Durham.