Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Fakulta humanitních studií

Daria Tolokonnikova

Bachelor Diploma Paper

Young and Footloose in Europe: Identity, Representation, and Participation in Independent

Travel Writing

Supervised by David Verbuč, M.A., Ph.D.

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I declare that I have written this Bachelor Diploma Paper myself and on my own. I have duly referenced and quoted all the material and sources that I used in it. This Paper has not yet been submitted to obtain any degree.

V Praze dne 29.6.2018 (in Prague, date)   ……....................................

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Introduction

The tradition of youth and student travel is a long-standing phenomenon. As Le Goff (2007, pp. 124-125) indicates, by the 13th century, scholars and students had already been accustomed to travel between universities. And while the focus of this thesis is generally on leisurely rather than educational travel, the underlying notion of mobility as essential part of one's lifestyle has now penetrated most aspects of human life, as John Urry demonstrates in *Mobilities* (2007). The role travel plays in the lives of young people is particularly enhanced: according to the report published by AirBnb in 2016, the majority of millennials see acquisition of property and paying off debts as wanting in significance while compared to making a journey. According to the World Tourism Organization (2017), the majority of the most popular destinations are situated in Europe. It is these statistics, as well as the fact that I am currently living in the Czech capital, that has made European cities and Prague in particular the focus of this research.

A number of multidisciplinary works have demonstrated a great potential of researching travel writing and particularly blogs: Li & Chignell (2010) use travel articles to study the effects of travelers' and readers' personality traits on the creation and perception of blogs, while Bosangit et al. (2012) link explore the relation between practices of travel blogging to tourists' behavior. In this research, I combine Bosangit's view of writing as a post-consumption stage of travel[1], and my own suggestion that although the practice of blogging is shaped by one's experience on the trip, it is also affected by travelers' social and cultural background. In this regard, I rely on Bourdieu's (1984) theory of hierarchy of cultural goods, particularly the notion of taste, which Bourdieu sees as a set of cultural needs. The relation between the knowledge

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[1] A stage that follows the consumption stage of travel (the trip) and is characterized by satisfaction, evaluation, but also storing, reflection, remembering of the event (Aho, 2001 and Larsen, 2007, as cited in Bosangit, 2012)

appreciation of cultural phenomena requires and the identity of a "traveler" who seeks local knowledge helps me deconstruct the binary "traveler" and "tourist", and show how it is (re-) created and used in travel writing by bloggers.

In this work, I aim to undertake an analysis of independent travel writing, both produced and consumed by travelers under 35, predominantly students. The paper examines a limited range of binary sets of identities, such as writer/reader, tourist/traveler, and local/outsider, to analyze the ways in which they are socially constructed and represented in travel blogs. In this research, I highlight three different stages of construction and presentation of their identities by travel bloggers: imagining of the local in the pre-travel stage (Chapter I), the stage where the traveler interacts with the local culture and people (Chapter II), and the production stage when the travel article is written (Chapter III). Additionally, as there is no clear boundary between any of the phases, I highlight the connections between them as well as the processes that characterize each stage. Furthermore, in all parts of this thesis I aim to establish how social and cultural identities of travel bloggers affect their experience at all three stages, and how the practices of travel help them construct these identities. For instance, in Chapter I, I show how various identities of blog authors affect the range of information sources they access in preparation for the trip. These, in turn, shape their writing: the image of the locals constructed by an African American female blogger has little in common with that conceived by a white European male traveler. Additionally, I demonstrate how the gap between the bloggers' expectations of Prague and their lived experience may serve to increase their credibility and relatability for their readers. Correspondingly, in Chapter II, I demonstrate how interaction with locals can be used to construct travelers' own identities. Finally, in the last chapter of this thesis I examine the relationship between travel bloggers' national identity, narratives delivered by tour guides, and

the bloggers' representation of Prague's communist past in their travel articles. Therefore, in this thesis I examine some of the ways in which various identities of travel bloggers can affect their imagination, interaction with, and representation of a place and the locals through their travel writings.

Methodology

In order to successfully investigate the main research questions of this thesis (as stated above), I rely on interviews with travel bloggers, participant observation at traveler-related spaces and events, and textual analysis of 11 travel blogs. Specifically, I interviewed nine bloggers, all of them white Europeans who have at some point traveled to and written about Prague. I interviewed nine travel bloggers and analyzed 11 blogs. Five of the interviews were conducted via Skype and semi-structured. The answers of the interviewees allowed me to use emic criteria for the distinction between tourists and travelers, as well as conduct a more in-depth analysis of their imaginations of the destination. In addition, I conducted four of the additional interviews and conversations via mobile phone messaging. Furthermore, I conducted fieldwork in a number of cafes that are popular among travelers and locals alike: bistro Sisters, Mezi Srnky and Cafedu. Furthermore, I did participant-observation at two weekly meetups of Couchsurfing members[2], and attended a "free walking tour"[3] around the Old Town. I have largely grounded my research in the information derived from my fieldwork by using it as an illustration and starting point for investigation of the phenomena I describe: for instance, taking a guided tour was vital for locating uses of binary terminology in discourse about socialism. Representations of Prague's communist past are the focus of Chapter III. Finally, by examining young travel bloggers'

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[2] Couchsurfing is a social platform that allows people to meet other members through staying with them while visiting a particular city or participating in events.

[3] A free walking tour is a sightseeing tour made on foot, where a compulsory attendance fee is substituted with tips to the guide.

articles about Prague, I was able to trace the ways in which the authors differentiated between themselves and the local people, how they imagined/perceived local people and places, communicated with their readers, and positioned themselves as tourists or travelers. Furthermore, to analyze writing strategies in the travel blogs, I have adopted the tools used by McWha et al. (2016), for instance, the use of first, second or third-person narration, descriptions of locality (people, food, landscape/architecture), description of travel as both the frame and the focus of the narration.

In addition to the criteria described above, I have also included analyses of few blog articles written by non-Europeans, specifically one by an Afro-American, and one by a Ukrainian, in order to be able to highlight some contrasts between both groups of writers; for example, the issue of racial identity was largely ignored by white Europeans, but extensively present in the writing of an African American blogger. Moreover, I have limited my examination of blogs to the ones written in English language. This was in part a pragmatic decision, since the number of languages I can speak is limited. My decision to adopt methods of textual analysis resulted from its successful application in cross-disciplinary tourism studies by Sharp (1999) and was inspired by Clifford's (1986) examination of literary tools in ethnography.

Personal Motivations and Limitations

My choice of the topic of this thesis was largely influenced by my then one-year long experience in travel blogging. Proceeding to complete my Bachelor's degree in humanities and specializing in anthropology had sharpened my attention to the ways in which I represented local people and cultures, as well as to the somewhat bewildering air of condescension I had caught myself wearing several times. My long-standing interest in gender relations, combined with my experiences of (solo) travel as a young white Russian female, influenced my decision to delimit

my research to issues of gender, race, nationality, and age identity of travel bloggers and travelers.

My own position as a temporary resident of Prague is that of both an insider and an outsider: this has allowed me, on the one hand, to distinguish between "touristy sights" and "local spots", and on the other, relate to the experience of visitors more easily. Additionally, having a strong background in travelling in Europe and blogging provided me with experiences that helped interpret the participants' answers and behavior.

At any rate, I have kept in mind that my own identities – as a Russian, as a woman, as a student at a local university, a traveler and blogger—influence both my experiences and research to a large extent. Nevertheless, I believe that being aware of these has been helpful in the process of communication with both travelers and locals, some of whom I had been lucky to know before embarking on the research. I, myself, have been an outsider: once in Prague, and multiple times – around Europe. Therefore, my current state of balancing between "localness" and "strangeness" is a curious illustration of how prominent interpretation is in identity construction: a native Prague resident might say I am an outsider, and a visiting Neapolitan may see me as a local.

Chapter I. Imagining the Local

During my fieldwork at weekly Couchsurfing meetups in Prague, I had several encounters where identities of my chatting partners and myself were revealed as unstable and contestable. This happened often when we discussed our countries or cities of residence—or places of birth, which in my case are different places. As related, the situation I describe in the following vignette, which took place in February 2018 at one of the weekly Couchsurfing meetups, was not new to me: it followed a pattern established earlier during my residence in Prague, after I began to consider and present myself as a "local." In other words, travelers who

visit Prague for a city break have tended to see me as a local; my Prague-born friends, on the other hand, would not label me so. In the conversation I present below, the boundary between both identities was blurred even more by the following factors: 1) the travelers I spoke to had lived in Prague for approximately one year, so they could also in some circumstances perform as knowledgeable locals; 2) I had resided in the city for a longer period of time (three years) and was living there when the conversation was taking place, which prevented the previous factor from undermining my "local-ness"; 3) I secured my position as a "local" by exhibiting knowledge of local places with good food: a kind of knowledge I discuss more extensively below; 4) as we switched between the countries, discussing Belgium and the Czech Republic, our identities as locals/travelers also changed accordingly (I had visited Belgium twice).

As the weekly karaoke session ended and one of the two local couchsurfers who had organized it announced that it took place every Sunday at ROJ, a karaoke bar in Nusle, I engaged Emily, a young Dutch traveler, in a conversation. I learnt that she had lived in Prague for one and a half year before, and had returned for the weekend with Olivia, her friend from Belgium, who had spent three years in the past living here as well. As the conversation turned to coffee and food, Emily called for Olivia's attention: I claimed there was plenty of good coffee in Prague, perhaps the best in Europe, if one knew the places—implying, of course, that I did. Olivia, who responded with indignation to my idea that Belgian coffee could be in any way inferior to any other kind, was soon calmed down by Emily. In my effort to mitigate my seeming dislike of Belgian coffee, I started praising Belgium's chocolate, which was a mistake, as I immediately noticed Olivia rolling her eyes and sighing in response.

"Oh, chocolate," she said, in a tone that may have implied either nostalgia or mockery.

"That's what we live on there, in Belgium. Breakfast? chocolate. Lunch? chocolate. Dinner? Of course, chocolate."

I could not tell if she was being ironic or serious. Arthur, another Belgian who now lived in Prague, was nodding along as she spoke, leaving me utterly confused.

Soon, based on my knowledge of local coffee places, Olivia began to joke, suggesting that I marry her—in a "very open" relationship—as long as I could advise her on local wine, too.

"You may be kidding," I warned her, laughing, "but I do need visa to stay here anyway, so…"

Before saying good-bye, we all exchanged Facebook contacts: in case any of us visits the others' country and would need an advice about good local food places.

I use this vignette to demonstrate how locals respond to outsiders stereotyping their culture through food, the latter being a powerful signifier of the "local culture" (Girardelli, 2004). Indeed, Girardelli's analysis of the myth of Italian food in American culture shows that for many the "typical" food/cuisine is in the center of a set of associations and stereotypes about a particular culture, even if these kinds of stereotypes are frequently also negative and false. Moreover, in one of the travel writing samples about Paris found in the work of McClinchey (2015, p. 713), the author expresses her dissatisfaction with the growing popularity of fast-food in Paris, the latter otherwise being stereotypically considered as the city of high cuisine. Such an approach sets limitations on the expected behavior of the locals, while also disregarding their class positions that affect such food choices and tastes (Bourdieu, 1984). Olivia's mockery from above could be similarly indicative of her desire to break free from the association of chocolate with Belgium, which consequently limits her as a particular person, not only regarding food and taste, but also as related to her cultural and social position. Her response could also be caused by

her previous experiences with tourists visiting Belgium, and their expectations and attitudes, , being ignorant about the richness of local food and only focusing on the stereotypical choice of chocolate. My self-identification as a food and travel blogger, which my chat partner was aware of, could have reinforced Olivia's irritation: in order to write about food, I clearly would look for diverse local cuisine, while I only indicated that "all I lived on while in Belgium was chocolate".

Hence, in this chapter I speak about the ways in which images of locals are constructed by travelers. I argue that the cultural and social background of travelers impact the kind of recommendations they search for, as well as the information they are exposed to without directly requesting it. My own interest in Belgian chocolateries as a food and travel blogger may serve as an example of such relation. Moreover, my taste and interest in a particular kind of food (chocolate) is conditioned by my belonging to the upper-middle class, according to Bordieu's hierarchy of cultural goods (1984), as well as race and nationality: the media I had been exposed to promoted chocolate as a symbol of Belgium, creating a fixed image of the local food culture.. Therefore, travelers' imaginations of locals depend on a wide range of variables such as gender, class, nationality, and the travelers' ability to speak the local language. Consequently, in this chapter I focus on the relationship between travelers' cultural and social background, the information they derive from it, and their resulting imagination of the locality. Further, in the section *When Images Do Not Overlap: Putting Differences to Work* I highlight the creative potential of constructing an image of a locality by travel writers. Specifically, I show how they adopt perceptions of local people and places as a tool of narration. Likewise, basing my study mainly on textual analysis of travel blogs and interviews of travel bloggers, I demonstrate how the imagination of local people and places is used by authors of the blogs to construct or foreground their own identity.

Pre-constructed Images of a Locality and the People

Exposure to sources of pre-travel information such as books, magazine articles, and movies, affect the way travelers imagine the places they visit and people who inhabit them (McClinchey, 2015). In this section, I discuss the impact of the information that travelers do not purposefully seek, but which is part of their social and cultural surroundings: for example, the depiction of Paris as a romantic place, which many of us have encountered without intentionally searching for it.

The articles I examine in this thesis show a difference between experiences of travelers that have low expectations from a destination or do not have any at all, and those who have a highly positive image of the city prior to the visit—for example, of Prague as a "more classy and discreet" city (Woods, 2016). However, before analyzing the relation between visitors' cultural perceptions of a city and of the image of the local places and people they form before and during the trip, I discuss the origins of these cultural representations and imaginations.

To illustrate the influence of cultural representations that are part of the travelers' social and cultural background, I use examples of two cities: Prague and Paris. The reason I have selected Paris is the fact that three out of nine travelers I interviewed named the French capital as a destination that was particularly meaningful for them because of their pre-travel imaginations of it. The reasons the bloggers gave for their choice varied, but two of the bloggers referred to the abundance of images of Paris in media. Lisa admitted she expected it to be "pretty" as in "all the pictures" (L. Seitelberger, personal communication, May 14, 2018), while Maria said she had heard "so many things about it", in addition to seeing the Eiffel tower "everywhere: in magazines… shops in the street" (M. Stoyanova, personal communication, May 14, 2018). In some of the articles, Paris was also referred to by its "pseudonyms" such as the "city of love"

(Dohmeyer, 2016) and the "City of Lights" (Cody, 2016), referring to the history of cultural representations of the city and to the perceptions of its general ambiance. I therefore, suggest that adoption of these cultural images indicates an exposure of the travelers though various media to the image of Paris as a romantic and historically significant city, and thus informing their perception of it.

Moreover, an imagination of the place is not only limited to its "ambiance", or what McClinchey (2015, p. 714), discussing literary representations of Paris, refers to as a "je ne sais quoi quality". In the same work, he describes a tendency to ascribe to the Parisians a refined taste, which results in disappointment when city visitors encounter "American" fast food in Paris (McClinchey, 2015, p. 713). Therefore, by participating in the culture of fast food, Parisians fail to live up to the visitors' expectations who see them as gourmets who, while in a restaurant, only consume the 'real', freshly prepared food (Murray Levine, 2014, p. 184). In a similar vein, Sharp (1999) in her observant work on the travel accounts of Peter Mayle demonstrates how depicting the Provencal food as "simple and honest" allows him to portray the locals as less sophisticated than their counterparts in bigger cities—and by implication, also the readers themselves (p. 204). Finally, the persuasiveness of such travel accounts is reinforced by an impression of expertise: Mayle had moved to Provence permanently, while one of the critics of the phenomenon of fast food in France, Welty-Rochefort (1997), had spent roughly two decades in Paris before publishing her book.

Therefore, by publishing their writings, both authors proceed from their imagination of the local places and people to their own representations in writing, which by means of mass consumption subsequently often also become part of the general cultural knowledge. While the scope of influence depends on multiple factors such as the publishing house the author works

with, the reception of the book, and the targeted audience, such travel writings still contribute to the pool of cultural knowledge accessible for a large part of the population. For instance, the publication of Mayle's books, which present Provence in a romanticized and idyllic light, has been linked to a growth in numbers of visitors to Provence and the birth of a "mini Provence-industry [in tourism]" in Britain (Sharp, 1999, pp. 200-201). Thus, the writings analyzed by McClinchey and Mayle's books, all of which are part of the tourism industry, set or re-enact expectations for food produce and consumption among the locals. With the food often being central to imaginations of a culture (Girardelli, 2004), inconsistencies in real life may result in travelers' dissatisfaction with the destination—and, as may be the case with Olivia's response at the Couchsurfing meetup, frustration among the locals.

Furthermore, the data I have collected through interviews and in travel blogs also indicates that perception of the cultural destination by travelers is influenced by the images they encounter or form prior to the travel itself. For instance, such was the case with Paris for the Norwegian-American food and travel blogger Marina, whom I interviewed for this thesis: she mentioned visiting it when she was younger. On that trip, she and her family spent most of their time in the surrounding areas rather than in the central parts of the city, so that the blogger "made it a point to visit Paris proper" in the future (M. Kirk, personal communication, March 24, 2018). In an answer to my follow-up question about her second visit to Paris, Marina mentioned that they "made sure to see the big things (Louvre, Notre Dame […])." The success of this planning strategy, which Marina emphasized by saying that she and her husband had spent a "glorious week" on their trip, shows the importance of visiting the most popular sights of the city, usually central in the cultural representation of Paris. Finally, the blogger said that during her third visit of Paris, the French capital "lived up to its allure, *even when* I hadn't spent much time in the city

center" (M. Kirk, personal communication, April 28, 2018; my italics), thus indicating that expectations she had had for Paris centered around its "touristy" sights. This is reinforced by the fact that the writer did not view staying outside of the city center as a "proper" visit of Paris, as opposed to seeing "the big things" there. Therefore, the way Marina imagined and experienced Paris demonstrates the power of cultural depictions of the city in the media and the role these play in one's travel patterns.

Similarly, the Bulgarian travel blogger Maria expected people in the Czech Republic to be warm and friendly, largely because of her previous experiences of communication with Eastern Europeans. The Czech Republic, for Maria, was part of Eastern Europe, which she described as relatively culturally homogenous. She admitted that she tended to find the Eastern Europeans as more warm to foreigners… more open… It's easier to make friends" (M. Stoyanova, personal communication, May 14, 2018). Later in the interview, the blogger agreed with my suggestion that her national identity may have been a reason why Maria "more easily connects with people from those [Eastern and Southern European] countries" (ibid.). In contrast to my initial assumption, she linked the ease of communication to the shared historical background, and not to the mentality of the people. Therefore, although the blogger based her imagination of the Czechs on personal experience, it may also have resulted from her initial cultural expectations as a self-identifying Eastern European. As Maria put it, "[the history of the Czech Republic] is a big part of how [locals] live now. In communist time – in Bulgaria it's the same, like, the life was different… Western Europe was developing in a different way, and now… they behave differently because of that" (ibid.). Similarly, Elena expected the Czechs to be "pretty close to how we are in Ukraine" (E. Skalovskaia, personal communication, June 13, 2018). Such cultural assumptions, based on ethnicity—Slavic nations—common history, and

geographical proximity affect the bloggers' imagination of the country of visit. Furthermore, these assumptions are already pre-mediated through media and education, and might also be tied to nationalist sentiments.

Just as Maria and Elena based their expectations on information that is part of their national cultural background and prior personal experience, I suggest that social class affected the imagination of Prague by the Brit Tom. The influence of class and nationality is noticeable in Tom's term "Pragaluf", which Tom uses to describe Prague's nightlife: "For a second, it was if I'd travelled back in time three years to Magaluf, swarmed by reps who wanted to sell me tickets and pull you into whatever bar they were working for" (Woods, 2016, para. 12). With "Pragaluf" appearing in the title of the post, "Europe daily blog #8: Pragaluf?", the reader must be able to understand the implications of Tom's term. Still, deconstructing the term into Prague and Magaluf was a difficult task for me. To understand this term, it is necessary not only to recognize the names of the cities "Pragaluf" is made up of, but be aware of the reputation of Magaluf, which I, for instance, was not. The blogger himself, in his next article about Prague, states that "The reasoning and logic behind it [the term] wasn't questionable when you consider that much of its attraction is tied up in its nightlife – a large part of which is a seedy enterprise" (Woods, 2016, para. 3). However, for "outsiders" like me, whose social/cultural background does not intersect with that of a typical visitor of Magaluf—a British high-school working-class graduate (Andrews, 2002; Daly, 2016; Martin, 2014; see also Razaq, 2014)—the reference remains unclear. Therefore, for those of Tom's readers who share his acquaintance with the reputation of Magaluf, the parallel helps construct an image of Prague as a place with a dubious night-life culture. Moreover, I suggest that linking the image of Prague to that of Magaluf may influence not only Tom's writing, but the immediate perception of the nightlife in the Czech capital: he

recalls feeling as though he had "travelled back in time three years to Magaluf." Tom adds that the persistent and omnipresent street promoters were not what he had expected from "a city as reputable as Prague", and finally juxtaposes his initial imagination of Prague to his reminiscences about Magaluf by demanding that the city changes the situation: "make it Prague, and not Pragaluf" (Woods, 2016).

As I have shown above, some of pre-travel knowledge that is part of travelers' cultural and social background can influence their imagination of local people and places. Such factors as shared history and geographical proximity, as well as ethnicity and current politics, determine what images are conveyed through media and education: for example, pan-Slavism could be traced in both Elena's and Maria's expectations of Prague locals. Additionally, social class and nationality affect travelers' perception of their surroundings, as in the case of Tom, who contrasts the "classy" Prague he expected to find with the nightlife of Magaluf, notoriously popular among among British visitors. Correspondingly, in the following section I demonstrate how a contrast between the initial imagination of a destination and bloggers' travel experience can serve to construct their own identities through text.

When Images Do Not Overlap: Construction of Writers' Identities through Juxtaposition

In several of the travel articles I examine, bloggers use juxtaposition as a literary device, contrasting imaginations of the place that they had prior to the visit and those they formed during the trip. Below, I show how through juxtaposition of the two images, initial and final, the bloggers construct their own identities as authors for their readers.

Upon analyzing thirteen travel blogs, I discovered that roughly one third of the authors highlighted the gap between their expectations about Prague and the Czech people, and the images they eventually formed based on their travel experience, in their articles. To this end, one

of the most frequently used strategies was to contrast the former to the latter. For instance, both Tom (Woods, 2016) and Gloria (Atanmo, 2015) adopted this method in order to construct an image of Prague as less culturally/socially 'refined' than they had expected. The experiences Tom had with promoters of night-clubs, strip-clubs, boat parties and other forms of entertainment taking place both during the day and at night, led him to wish that Prague was more "classy" and "discreet" (Woods, 2016). In short, Tom wanted to see more of "Prague" than of "Pragaluf", which is an allusion to Magaluf, a resort in Spain, Majorca, that is famous for its nightlife entertainment and for the often reckless and disrespectful behavior of heavily intoxicated tourists. Thus, Tom's adoption of the comparison strategy does serve to construct the image of Prague as a decadent nightlife destination and to undermine the "reputability" of it (Woods, 2016, para. 13). However, as I show above, it reveals aspects about Tom's own identities such as his British nationality and perhaps social class, rather than helps him construct his image as an author. By contrast, Gloria (Atanmo, 2015) uses the inconsistencies she describes to boost her relatability as an author through strategies I discuss below.

Undoubtedly, some of Gloria's experiences in Prague were shaped by her identities: as an Afro-American, she found the attitude of people she encountered in the Czech capital racist, and as a woman, she found it sexist. In this way, the resulting experience of the city's population contradicted, as she stated on her blog, with the "stream of comments about how Prague was everyone's 'favorite city'" (Atanmo, 2015). Gloria's racial identity and sex have two important functions in the text: they lend authenticity to her experience and bring the reader to the author's side through empathy. This gives the writer more freedom in her descriptions, as well as higher confidence in comparison to travel bloggers who do not have such reinforcement: for example, the British blogger Laura says that she and her fiancé never write about the place and local

people until they "can offer something positive" (L. Cody, personal communication, April 2, 2018). Furthermore, Gloria reinforces her credibility by her repeated assurances that as a traveler, the blogger is "an easy pleaser" who tries to "blend in" whenever possible (Atanmo, 2015, para. 6). Indeed, Gloria is this only author whose blog I examine who speaks negatively of Prague locals with a degree of confidence: "I'm fully aware there will be creeps, jerks, and losers in every city or country regardless of where you are. But to feel like I got a taste of each collectively in just the two days I was in Prague doesn't sit well with me" (Atanmo, 2015, para. 23). Further in the article, Gloria describes a situation where, while she was about to cross the road, young men stopped the car, "muttered some words, smirked, and I felt them practically undressing me with their eyes". Before the story, however, comes the part where Gloria describes a woman next to her, who did not get comments or stares from passers-by despite being "more dressed for the job [of a prostitute]". Still, Gloria claims, in contrast to "some locals", she does not "go around sticking prostitute labels on pretty people." Thus, in Gloria's article, accounts of her experiences as an Afro-American female traveler in Prague alternate with negative descriptions of locals. Such presentation helps the blogger construct her image as a credible author who is able to offer an authentic point of view.

Finally, the image of Prague Maria (Stoyanova, 2016) constructs in her article indicates her strong self-perception as a professional blogger, which she confirmed during our interview. Her adoption of juxtaposition, as I demonstrate below, helps frame Maria's personality as an author: a positive, independent thinker. Such image is more attractive for readers and makes it more likely that they want to identify with the blogger. Thus, the image Maria creates increases the credibility of her writing by means I describe in this section. Maria begins her article about winter-time Prague with a parable about a man who, while speaking to two newcomers to his

(unknown) city, promises the one who complains about his hometown that the people here will not be any better. To the other one, who loves and praises the land he left, the wiseman says that the new home will be just as welcoming. The moral of the parable is that whether the individual finds the place and local people agreeable depends on the character of the individual person. Then, in the following paragraph, the reader learns that Maria "was told" (by a friend, as she specified in our interview) that she would not be able to "enjoy Prague with all the crowds", and that, overall, she would find it unpleasant and unsafe. Her description of Prague as a beautiful and friendly place is juxtaposed to the warnings Maria had received. This contrast, I suggest, serves as an indirect index (Ochs, 1990 as cited in Hill, 2006) of Maria's positive and open-minded approach: she does not openly compare herself to her informant, but juxtaposition is clearly implied. The effect is strengthened by the indefinite number of Maria's informants, which makes it easier for readers to imagine that multiple people misjudged Prague in a conversation with the blogger. The contrast, in this case, becomes more vivid. It is further reinforced by Maria's omission of the positive comments about Prague she had received prior to her visit, as she mentioned in the interview (M. Stoyanova, personal communication, May 14, 2018). Therefore, the indirect indexicality of Maria's use of juxtaposition, allows her to perform as an independent, positive thinker. Thus, the credibility of the blogger increases. Additionally, readers are more likely to wish to relate to an author who is open-minded and optimistic. According to Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory (as cited in Metzger and Flanagin, 2013, p. 218), this may further boost Maria's trustworthiness as an author.

Hence, I have shown how travel bloggers can use juxtaposition to construct their identities as authors, by highlighting the gap between their initial imaginations of Prague and the perception of it that they form during the trip. Specifically, I have located strategies of stressing

authenticity of described experience through the blogger's identities such as race and gender, and indirect indexes of the writer's positive qualities through contrasting them to someone else's: in the case of Maria, to those who misjudge Prague, and in the case of Gloria, to "the locals". Therefore, the bloggers' use of such strategies, in the articles I have examined, help increase their credibility and relatability in the eyes of their readers.

Chapter II. Construction of Identity through Interaction with the Locals

In the previous chapter, I demonstrate the power of identities in imagining the locals and their culture. Presently, I aim to show how travel bloggers' position as travelers or tourists shape their interaction with locals. To do so, I rely on interviews with travel bloggers I have conducted and fieldwork I did at Couchsurfing meetups that take place every Sunday in Nusle, a residential district in Prague.

It was a winter Sunday evening, two hours after a weekly meetup of couch surfers began. I slid down from the chair in a karaoke bar ROJ in the depths of Nusle, Prague, with a cocktail in hand: I needed one to not feel like an outsider among the other attendees, all with alcoholic drinks. Then, I went to the second room to write down some of the rapidly changing topics that the conversation in the room offered. An American girl, Juliana, was speaking to a small party: roughly half of them were American, and the rest were European, mostly Czech. Those around her were discussing Berlin, and rather lively. Juliana, who had spent a year there, had plenty of suggestions:

'The kebab spot people say is the best,' she said, apparently referring to websites popular with tourists, such as Tripadvisor, 'isn't the best.'

'Oh, that's part of saying it is,' one of the men replied with, it seemed to me, an air of disdain.

The conversation was of the kind I had already heard before: a group that consisted primarily of young people, dressed in markedly slouchy, non-fashionable clothing appeared to see themselves exceptionally as travelers. My assumption was confirmed as Juliana began speaking of tourists as a group she clearly did not belong to. It was also highlighted by the treatment of the American girl by the listeners as she mentioned she had lived in Berlin for a

prolonged period of time. Once aware of her "local-ness", the members of the circle centered their attention on Juliana and multiplied their questions. The knowledge of the destination, as I demonstrate in Chapter II, is central to the definition of traveler and the local: while the latter is knowledgeable by virtue of their residency in the city, the former seeks to obtain this knowledge through interaction and going "off the beaten path".

Furthermore, the discussion in the above vignette, as well as the overwhelming majority of answers concerning 'local-ness' and learning about the place/culture in the interviews I conducted centered around food. As the study by Bessiere and Tibere (2013) indicates, tourists' eating patterns tend to change during travel due to a shift in priorities: travelers prefer local food, whether "healthy" or not, seeing it as a means of getting to know the culture. Consequently, knowledge of places where a meal associated with the area/local culture is prepared best becomes an attribute of a knowledgeable local or a traveler who had obtained this information from the local. Therefore, the symbolic role of food is significant both for representation of a culture and construction of "local-ness" by its visitors. Having such information in one's disposal or seeking it makes one a traveler rather than a tourist.

As responses of the interviewees and the articles analyzed show, the emphasis of knowledge is crucial to the tourist/traveler distinction. In this context, travelers are positioned closer to the local than tourists through having access to more and better information. The role of local knowledge is also hierarchical and status-bound. One of recurring images in the travel bloggers' interviews, articles and conversations I heard on my fieldwork was that of Asian tourists taking pictures. I suggest that it is not only the hierarchical character of street photography (Urry, 2002, pp. 125-130) and its resulting intrusiveness that make some of the bloggers see Asian visitors as the prototype of a tourist. In addition to this, I suggest that their

visible "otherness" helps the travel writers dissociate themselves from "the tourists"; later in the chapter I discuss the reasons for such split through Bourdieu's (1984) hierarchy of cultural goods.

Furthermore, traveler communities that I examine in my thesis often see themselves as travelers and wish to distinguish themselves from tourists. This, however, is not always the case. Several of the bloggers I interviewed refused to choose between the two identities, yet none of them self-identified as a tourist: instead, they denied the validity of such differentiation. Similarly, researchers argue extensively whether the division between tourists and traveller is correct and meaningful (Clifford, 1986; Liu, 2013; Krüger & Trandafoiu, 2014). McWha et al. (2016, p. 97), for instance, suggest that the motivation behind travellers' desire of differentiation from the "flocks of tourists" is the feeling of guilt that these travellers carry in relation to tourism's destructive effects on tourist destinations. In a similar vein, AlSayyad (2001, p. 18) notes that tourists have little opportunity—or motivation—to explore the actual local culture, and a number of interviewees see commodification of culture as an issue that is ubiquitous in the culture of tourism and not travel. Irrespective of the cultural reasons underlying the split, this kind of insider classification is relevant methodologically as it provides scholars with useful analytical tools. My interest in the way travel bloggers themselves interpret these identities emerged during the interview with a teen Danish blogger, who reflected on the subject with great perceptibility. The youngest of the interviewees, she seemed careful in choosing the terms in which she saw this distinction: tourists, she said, somehow "got a bad rap" [4]. It occurred to me that although influential among researchers in various disciplines, this cultural distinction has no

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[4] Bad rap – bad reputation, often unjustified (McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions, 2006)

clear image in the consciousness of travellers themselves, yet as the varied responses indicate, retains its power.

Therefore, the questions I ask in the chapter are: What is the role participation with locals plays in travel writers' self-identification? How do the established identities of the bloggers affect their patterns of interaction with local people? To answer these, I rely on fieldwork and the interviews with travel bloggers I conducted for the purposes of this thesis.

I am He as You are He: Travelers and Tourists

Researchers differ in their views on the distinction between "tourists" and "travelers" (Liu, 2013; Krüger & Trandafoiu, 2014). Therefore, before starting to write my thesis, I was facing a problem of definition: what defines a traveler or a tourist, and who determines the criteria? Therefore, my decision, largely influenced by interpretive and inclusive politics of Clifford (1986), Geertz (1973) and especially Abu-Lughod (1991), was to let the "travelers" and/or "tourists" themselves determine the boundaries between and the validity of both categories. Thus, rather than adopting etic theoretical definitions for this distinction, I rely here rather on emic opinions of the interviewees—"tourists" and "travelers" themselves—and on their attitudes and behaviors I observed during fieldwork. Nevertheless, a lot of the qualities the interviewees saw as a part of a "tourist" or "traveler" identity had also been suggested by researchers. Moreover, both researchers and my interlocutors themselves frequently mentioned the aspect of interaction with the locals as an important factor in deciding whether one is considered a "tourist" or a "traveler." In their interviews, as well as in their articles, the travel bloggers often linked intensive participation with the local population, and the act of individual immersion into the local culture as a typical "traveler's" behavior. Correspondingly, Galani-Moutafi (2000, p. 210) suggests that tourists are in literature commonly portrayed as

"unadventurous and lacking initiative and discrimination"; the travelers, on the other hand, are ascribed the values of discernment, respect, and taste.

The divide between qualifiers such as active and passive, and engaged and consumerist carries obvious implications for the construction of images of "travelers" and "tourists:" the former is favourable, while the latter is unflattering. Hence, their cultural and social associations implicate hierarchy in value. For instance, the travel blogger Elena expressed confidence in the validity and significance of the division: "Of course, there's a difference between travelers and tourists. Travelers are more curious… they do their own path; tourists just can't be bothered, they just take [check] the boxes, I think". Further in the interview, she described travelers as conscious and caring about environment, and looking for meaning rather than mere visiting famous places on their trips. Unsurprisingly, the blogger concluded that she was certainly a "traveler." (E. Skalovskaia, personal communication, June 13, 2018)

Therefore, I use Bourdieu's (1984) theory of hierarchy of cultural goods to highlight the differing contributions of the identities of "tourist" and "traveler" into one's cultural capital. The assumption that underlies the local/outsider binary I have introduced as "visitor" versus "local", is that the local possesses valuable knowledge necessary to "decipher", or maximize the efficiency of consumption of the destination. Moreover, Bourdieu argues that the knowledge of "local spots", or the knowledge required to appreciate and "decode" art (Bourdieu, p. 2), is exclusive. In other words, it is a matter of taste: in Bourdieu, taste stands for cultural needs, "the product of upbringing and education" (p. 1). Taste allows the person to appreciate cultural goods through the means of knowledge about the object. Thus, since it takes not simply the information itself to make one a "traveler", but the recognition of the value of the local knowledge in the first place, the traveler, too, needs taste. Using Bourdieu's theory, I also suggest that there may be a

link between one's social class and the identity one (un-) intentionally adopts, as in the case of working-class tourists at Magaluf I briefly discuss in the previous chapter. Similarly, Urry (2002, p. 150) distinguishes between multiple "gazes", such as private, "semi-spiritual" romantic gaze (middle-class travelers) and collective gaze of the working-class tourists. Urry's description closely resembles the description of tourists as intrusive and disrespectful, as described by my interviewees, and also moving in "hoards" around the locality—and travelers, who aspire to appreciate the place and its peculiarities, often moving around independently (which is a prerequisite for the romantic gaze). The gap between the appreciation—taste—of travelers and indifference of tourists shows the distinction between the two as hierarchical and related to one's social status. Building on this assumption, I explore in the next section the relation between one's identification as a "traveler" or "tourist," and how one's interaction with the local culture defines this classification.

Interaction and Dissociation: Becoming a Traveler through Participation with Locals

In this section, I determine the importance of patterns of participation in local culture through communication with the locals, and of route planning among travelers in their self-identification as "travelers" or "tourists." Relying on ethnographic data and analysis of interviews and blogs, I identify three groups of travelers according to their views of the distinction between tourists and travelers to locate possible differences in patterns of interaction with locals among the bloggers.

The first group includes the bloggers who self-identify as "travelers" and draw a clear boundary between the two identities. Among such travel writers, it is common to express interest in the local culture and to seek to experience the destination "like a local, and not like a tourist"

(H. Dohmeyer, personal communication, April 2, 2018). From the bloggers whose articles I examine, Sintija, Harriet, Elena and Emily fall into this category.

Representatives of the second group, Tom and Maria, reject the separation of "travelers" from "tourists" and identify themselves as the latter: a pattern I examine in detail below, using the bloggers' extensive interview answers and Bourdieu's (1984) theory of hierarchy of cultural goods, where knowledge and appreciation of a cultural phenomenon are ascribed a value. According to this theory, I argue that the identity of the "traveler" contributes to an individual's cultural capital, while that of the "tourist" is devalued.

Finally, the third group consists of bloggers who do not have a formed opinion about the distinction between the culturally determined categories of "tourists" and "travelers". They either changed their answers as the interview proceeded (Lisa), refrained from self-identification (Anika), or used a neutral response by emphasizing that neither identity was good or bad (Marina).

The criteria the bloggers chose to discriminate between "tourists" and "travelers" included the act of interaction with the locals, seen as a sign of respect for the people and the culture by most of the interviewees, and the way travelers plan their itineraries. For example, Laura, one of the two authors behind the blog *Travelling Weasels*, distinguished between the "tourists" and "travelers" based on their own itineraries: travelers may want to skip the popular sights, whereas "tourists are more like 'I'm only here once, better do it now'" (L. Cody, personal communication, April 2, 2018). She was not the only one who understood the distinction in this way. Planning the route and moving around independently was the second most-commonly mentioned feature that distinguished a "traveler" from a "tourist." For instance, Anika believed she could not be a "traveler" but only a "tourist," because she was traveling with her family—

that is, not independently (A. Molbæk, personal communication, March 8, 2018). I suggest that this view allows the blogger to retain her identity as a traveler, while ascribing her "touristy" behavior to the particular circumstances. Sintija's answer summarized both points as she proposed that tourists "do not communicate with locals" for two reasons: 1) tourists "have a different path [than local people], so they might not meet them [the locals]"; 2) tourists move in groups and "have a guide", so they "don't have to ask locals" for directions (S. Erte, personal communication, March 8, 2018). Thus, Sintija stressed the independence factor: mixing with the locals implies deviation from the "tourist" path, and thus being *unlike* the "tourist." Similarly, Emily in her article juxtaposed tourists with those who go "off the beaten path"; however, she did not mention interaction with the locals. Thus, the importance of traveling outside the tourist spaces here is considered as equally or more important than that of participating in the local culture through interaction with the people. I use this perception as an evidence for the assumption that "traveler" marks a relational distinctiveness and a social status rather than a particular (substantive) way to interact with the destination and its locals. My further analysis of interviews and travel blogs confirms this supposition and provides insights into the topic.

However, before I delve into the analysis, I want to call into question the very notion of "respect" for the local culture, which is perceived by my informants to be expressed through an interaction with locals. Indeed, there is more than one kind of interaction, and not all of them imply respect for the culture or the traveler's participation in it. Communication with the locals can serve purely utilitarian purposes, as the analysis of a sample of American travel writings by Santos (2006) shows. There, she finds the theme "They Looked After My Needs" (the author's term which refers to representation of locals by travel writers) prevalent in the texts. Such interaction is limited to ordering in restaurants, asking for directions, and receiving help from the

local. In Santos's own words, this theme refers to a pattern where "the host is in the story only in so far as it enables them [the writers] achieve their goals" (Santos, 2006, p. 631). This, Santos argues, leaves the host at the periphery and thus allows for little or no recognition of their sociocultural background. While the problem Santos focuses on is colonialism and its consequences, I suggest that this approach of using locals to achieve writers' own goals is a more general strategy used by travel writers, particularly in destinations such as Prague where there have been strong power inequalities (for example, Germans and Russians are sometimes viewed as imperialists by Czech people (Deichmann, 2002, p. 49). Additionally, some locals may feel threatened or misused by foreign visitors (ibid.). Thus, the tendency among my interviewees who define "travelers" as those who interact with locals by seeking advice or service from them is problematic as it already frames the interaction in hierarchical and exploitative terms. Therefore, to identify "travelers" among the bloggers, I will also be interested in the interaction that goes beyond asking locals for services as better corresponding with the criterion of "respect to the culture/interaction with the locals". To analyze the differences between writers who see themselves as tourists or travelers—or neither—I break them into three groups, based on the identities they adopt.

The first group I examine consists of the bloggers who self-identify as "travelers." The criteria they use to determine whether one belongs to this category varies: both Sintija and Harriet, while interviewed, named interaction with locals as the main feature that distinguishes a "traveler" from a "tourist." However, Sintija additionally stressed the importance of the independence in the planning of the itinerary, while Harriet's focus was on "respect" for the host culture and the local people—an aspect that had been emphasized by at least three other interviewees, including Anika and Lisa.

Sintija, whose self-identification as a "traveler" was the strongest ("let me imagine. If I would be a tourist in a group…"), viewed "unpredictability" as the defining quality of a "traveler." As she said, "If you're a tourist, it means that you have a guide… You don't have to ask locals. But if you are a traveler, a spontaneous traveler… You have to ask locals about the route." (S. Erte, personal communication, March 8, 2018). Nevertheless, while asking for directions is certainly a way to communicate with local people, Sintija admitted that despite spending two semesters on an exchange student program in Prague, she hardly ever spoke to a Czech person. She thus falls under the category of travelers who engage in unequal interaction.

Furthermore, Emily of *Emily Luxton Travels* in her article "Prague Off the Beaten Path" (Luxton, 2017) describes ways to "avoid the crowds of tourists" in the Czech capital, thus clearly contrasting her own identity and presumably the blog readers' identity as well to that of the "tourist." Her writing is in this regard primarily concerned with route-planning: she recommends sights and attractions such as beer spa, and advises about the best time to visit Prague to "avoid huge crowds of tourists" (para. 10). By implication, the knowledge Emily provides on her blog is that of an insider—a local or a "savvy visitor," whom she supposedly advises (para. 1).

Textual analysis of Emily's articles provides further clues: the blogger adopts several strategies for "positive politeness"—a form of politeness that focuses on an individual's need to be accepted and liked, through which she attracts the sympathies of her readers (Talbot, 2007, pp. 52-57). One of these is the use of the second person narration, which personalizes the narrative and brings in the feeling of belonging: Emily repeatedly addresses the reader directly, as in a friendly talk ("And you can even drink a pint or two whilst you take your beer bath!"). The only time Emily uses first-person narration in the article is when she speaks of her "personal favorite" for a good view ("Letná" park). By doing so, she demonstrates "local" knowledge

without explicitly stating she is an insider. This is reinforced by Emily's spelling of the name of the park in a proper Czech writing system ("á" with a diacritic mark). Thus, she uses what Ochs (1990; as cited in Hill, 2006) terms "indirect indexicality": a covert sign of belonging to the community of the locals. Moreover, by separating herself and her readers from "huge crowds of tourists" who "would never think to visit [a cemetery]" (Luxton, 2017, para. 8), the knowledgeable author and the curious readers unite against the "ignorance of outgroups" (Talbot, 2007, p. 53).

Additionally, Emily's credibility is strengthened by the easy-to-find author's bio on the top of the blog page (http://emilyluxton.co.uk/) where she describes herself as an "award-winning writer" who practices "deeper travel" (Luxton, author's bio). The fact that the bio is written in third person and the presence of credentials contributes to the perceived professionalism of the blogger. Finally, the adoption of second-person narration and the demonstration of like-mindedness by addressing her readers directly, and both of them as different from the "tourists" helps Emily establish a friendly relationship with the reader.

After highlighting Emily's her strategic use of various language devices to position herself as a "traveler" to boost her credibility as an author, I examine two criteria that the bloggers most commonly used to distinguish themselves as "travelers" and not "tourists." The first of these is a particular type of travel itinerary: a subject highlighted in the very title of one of the bloggers' articles, "PRAGUE OFF THE BEATEN PATH" (Luxton, 2017). The page URL suggests an alternative: Unusual Prague[5] . Therefore, the article presumably focuses on places in the itinerary of a typical "travel" visitor, which includes the places that are not part of the "tourist"itinerary. Therefore, this is not so much about the *inclusion* of particular "off" places

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[5] https://www.emilyluxton.co.uk/czech-republic/unusual-prague

(substance of itinerary), but more about the *exclusion* of particular "on"/"tourist" places (itinerary as a relational distinction) to help the readers "experience Prague like a local" (Luxton, 2017). Nonetheless, most of the places listed in the blog post are very popular with visitors: the Jewish cemetery is mentioned in at least three other blog posts (Angharad and Becky, 2018; Kirk, 2017; Molbæk, 2017), with only one of the authors viewing herself as a traveler. Similarly, beer spa is largely a touristic entertainment, and Karlštejn, as Emily herself notes, is "the most visited castle in Prague". She, however, later adds that most tourists "never leave the city", so visiting the castle would be in her view perhaps more of a traveler's activity.

The second criterion, intensity of interaction with locals, is difficult to measure. Nevertheless, the text of Emily's article (Luxton, 2017) does not indicate that there was any interaction of the travel blogger with the local population. Furthermore, the possible lack of desire or will to engage with the local culture is indicated by the fact that most Czech names are written using the English alphabet (without diacritics). Some of the place-names are spelt according to the Czech rules, while the distribution of Czech/anglicized spelling appears arbitrary. Thus, extending the theory of "indirect indexicality" (Ochs, 1990 as cited in Hill, 2006), I suggest that the Czech spelling signals the author's "local-ness", but does not indicate her immersion into the culture language-wise. Most readers, unless they are Czechs or people who have learnt the language, will not know whether "Karlsteijn" (Czech: Karlštejn) is the correct spelling. Thus, Emily's occasional use of the Czech alphabet contributes towards her persona as a traveller from an etic position but not to her identity from an emic perspective. Interestingly, Lisa, who did not have a formed opinion about the tourist/traveler distinction, mentioned that while writing about "local food or something that's really specific", she would

try to "spell it in the way they [locals] spell it", since she saw it as a sign of respect. Respect for the host culture, furthermore, was seen as vital for a traveler by a number of interviewees.

Hence, relying on the definitions of the bloggers I interviewed, Emily's position as a traveler does not meet her own requirement for being a "savvy visitor" (Luxton, 2017): almost none of the places she explores are "off the beaten path". The identity of a traveler serves more as an issue of status feature than a as a label that could be assigned on the basis of particular patterns of behavior.

Representatives of the second group, Tom and Maria, rejected the classification of city visitors as either "travelers" or "tourists". Both explicitly mentioned the fact they had encountered the division often and found it unhelpful:

"… We're all tourists, and we can choose to do whatever we want, we can choose to do touristic things, let's say… visit only the most popular sights… or we can do it in a different way," said Maria (M. Stoyanova, personal communication, May 14, 2018). Thus, although the blogger acknowledges the existence of "touristic things" as a distinct category and implicitly identifies herself as a traveler occasionally engaging in "touristic" activities, she rejects it as a basis for assigning of an identity. Similarly, Tom saw the distinction as grounded in personal choice of activities during the trip rather than ideologically differing approaches of tourists and travelers. In the interview, the blogger called the dismissal of "touristy" activities such as visiting of museums and famous tourist sights "snobbish". (T. Woods, personal communication, May 9, 2018). Therefore, both travel writers identify themselves as above any category. This confirms my statement that in Bourdieu's hierarchy of cultural goods, the status of a "traveler" is higher in value than that of a "tourist". Moreover, Tom's use of the term "snobbish" to define travelers'

desire to separate themselves from tourists demonstrates that the status value of both categories is realized or identified by the blogger himself.

As in Emily's case, the behavior of both Tom and Maria would not quite meet the criteria for their chosen identities as tourists, as their activities demonstrate low intensity of interaction with locals and following planned, popular routes as opposed to traveling "off the beaten path" (Luxton, 2017). Although Tom mentioned that he did not communicate with the locals much during his visit of Prague, his itinerary appears to me rather unusual: it included a guided tour to a nuclear bunker, which does not necessarily count as a typical tourist entertainment. This, however, is arguable for two reasons: 1) as Braûoveanu (2016, p. 163) points out, it is foreign visitors that is are responsible for the development of communist heritage tourism; 2) the representation of the communist past may be staged to meet the expectations of foreigners and reductive, as, for example, I found it to be in Prague's Museum of Communism. There, undoubtedly, the images were mostly consumed by the foreign audience. Prevalence of such depictions leads to objectification of the everyday life of a contemporary member of the communist society, who is thus silenced. Rapport and Overing (2002, pp. 102-103) link such power relation to production of "'others' as 'exotic curiosities for European consumption'".

Furthermore, Maria's interaction with locals was perhaps the most intensive from all the interviewees: she was attending an event designed for travel bloggers, and, in her own words, she was the only non-Czech person present there. The Czech travel writers, she said, shared their tips with her, and showed her around the city. Moreover, it is possible that most of Maria's knowledge of the destination came from her fellow Czech bloggers rather than her social and cultural background: in a section dedicated to works of David Černý, a controversial Czech sculptor, the blogger refers to the writer Franz Kafka, whose figure is a prominent symbol of

Prague, as "another Czech artist". By contrast, David Černý, the artist Maria learnt about from the locals, received much of Maria's attention in the article. In the interview, she called his works the "highlight" of her trip. By focusing on his sculptures, the blogger delved beyond the cultural phenomena normally consumed by to tourists, such as the image of Kafka, and explored internationally less known local artists.

Therefore, the self-identification of the bloggers in the second group was not consistent with the image of tourists held by most interviewees: their interaction with locals was not less frequent than that of the first group, and, as I will show below, the third group. It could also be argued that the itineraries of both included less popular sights.

Finally, the third category comprise the bloggers whose views on the tourist/traveler distinction were uncertain or were shifting. As a result, they either changed their answers during the interview (Lisa), refrained from self-identification (Anika), or made their response sound neutral by emphasizing that neither identity was good or bad (Marina). However, all of them could be categorized as "travelers," according to a set of emic criteria given above. For instance, Lisa admitted that she used any opportunity to start a conversation with a local: "If I go to a restaurant or if I just ask for directions, I always try to do small talk with people and not just, like, ask them and then leave" (L. Seitelberger, personal communication, May 14, 2018). Such deviation from the pattern Santos (2006) names "They Looked After My Needs" moves Lisa's interaction with the locals closer to the travelers' end of the scale. The way she spoke about tourists changed in the course of the interview: at the beginning, while answering the question about the difference between tourists and travelers, Lisa clearly stated her identity as a traveler. In fact, to speak about travelers, she used the first person singular: "I really try to learn about the culture and talk to locals, or go to… maybe things that are not popular" (L. Seitelberger, personal

communication, May 14, 2018). This she juxtaposed to the behavior of "just a tourist", who, the blogger suggested, would take a guided tour and visit "all the popular sights", but not "dive into the culture" (ibid.). Nonetheless, later in the interview I pointed out the writer's inclusion of herself into the "tourists" category, in her article (Seitelberger, 2018), but Lisa assured me it was unintentional and then repeatedly asserted that she did not find the separation meaningful, although it was significant for some people.

Similarly, Marina said that she wanted to "see a city like a local", and in order to merge herself into a culture she would try to go shopping to places where locals went, eat in "mom and pop restaurants", and walk everywhere on foot to see sights that "aren't in any guidebook" (M. Kirk, personal communication, March 24, 2018). Nevertheless, she was quick to note that "there's nothing wrong with being a tourist." Finally, Anika, who was still a teenager when interviewed, hoped that she would become "a bit of both" once she begins to travel solo: that is, to see the popular sights as well as to treat the host culture with respect and venture beyond the guidebooks' itineraries (A. Molbæk, personal communication, March 8, 2018). Therefore, Anika's attitude to the tourist/traveler distinction seemed rather neutral. Anika also suggested viewing attempts to learn phrases in the local language, and asking locals for tips, as part of traveler's identity. Before this, she mentioned that she and her family would do both. Therefore, while Anika did not self-identify as a traveler while she traveled with her family, she stressed the non-touristic patterns of her family's behavior on trips. Combined with her note that tourists have a "bad rap" (ibid.), this remark indicates the blogger's awareness of the higher social/cultural value of travelers' identity compared those of tourists, and desire to be the former rather than the latter.

Thus, relying on interviews and blogs I analyze for this thesis, I have found that there is no straightforward correlation between writers' self-identification and their traveling behavior. However, there are indications of desire to self-identify as a traveler or alternatively to evade this question altogether, which I link to Bourdieu's hierarchy of cultural goods. Strategies of self-representation these travelers use involve contradictions in terms of the discrepancy between saying and doing, or discourse and practice. Such contradictions are addressed by a discursive strategy of blurring the line between tourists and travelers, as in the case of the third group of travel bloggers, or by a strategy of alienating oneself from the tourist/traveler distinction employed by the second group. Eventually, however, all participants demonstrated an awareness of the status value of tourists and travelers identities, and avoided positioning themselves as the former both in their texts and interviews. Thus, although the considerably small scale of the research does not allow for any sweeping generalization, I suggest my findings may reflect a broader reality of young travelers' attitudes and behavior. Namely, they show that the distinction between tourists and travelers is part of one's cultural capital, and is contradictory. Thus, the choice of either identity reflects the person's standing and aspirations in one's social life rather than any set of fixed attitudes toward the host culture and to particular patterns of behavior within it.

Chapter III. Producing the Local

In this chapter I discuss an outcome of the phenomena touched upon earlier in this thesis, that the production of a travel article is normally a post-experiential activity. All of the interviewed travel bloggers said they wrote their blog posts using notes they would take during the trip or based on their memories, but invariably after the travel itself. Therefore, I follow Bosangit (2012), in considering writing to be a post-consumption stage of travel. Below I use the example of guided tours taken by travel bloggers to demonstrate how a combination of information that is part of the visitor's cultural background, and data derived from tour guides' presentations influences blog representation of the local culture and people. More specifically, I examine representations of Prague's communist past in blog posts, as mediated by tour guides. Thus, I chose one of "free walking tours"[6] that are conducted daily in the old center of Prague as a part of my fieldwork research.

It was a sunny morning in June, and I was standing in a crowd of travelers, all of us listening to a tour guide on one of the "free walking tours" that several of the Prague's tourist agencies offer. At the beginning of the tour, the guide had asked what nationality the participants are: "any British here? There are usually quite a few British… Americans? Australians? Scandinavians?"

I could not help but notice that all the nationalities he had named were not part of the Eastern Bloc; moreover, the majority of the attendees did come from the countries he named. There were also several Singaporeans and a person from Poland—one out of forty. The guide himself was Czech: although born in Moravia, he had spent some 18 years in Prague.

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[6] A free walking tour is a sightseeing tour made on foot, where a compulsory attendance fee is substituted with tips to the guide.

Now, after one round around the old town, we were again standing in Staroměstské náměstí (the Old Town Square), where we had started, listening the tour guide talking about the surrounding buildings that had survived the Nazi occupation. Soon we had learnt that the allies of the Czech Republic "kind of sold us [the Czechs] to Hitler", so "Nazis, they just marched in this country"—despite the fact that "a lot of people were ready to fight back, to defend the country, but without allies, being kind of betrayed, for a small country… and don't forget the two millions of local Germans […] who very actively supported Hitler". He concluded that "in those days, to fight back would have been suicide."

Further, the focus of the narrative shifted to the end of the World War II: the Americans, said the guide, could have liberated Czechoslovakia earlier. Indeed, the guide said, he [the American general] "wanted to, but unfortunately he couldn't" as he was "forced" to cede to "Stalin, the Russian dictator". The liberation did not occur sooner because Stalin "demanded to liberate Prague: he, unfortunately, had future plans with this country". With the coming of communism, the guide added, "one evil was replaced with another."

During this speech, the audience stood still, and no one was surfing the net on their smartphones: maybe one or two quickly glanced at their handy devices, but otherwise everyone's gazes were fixed on the guide.

This vignette features several of the aspects I discuss later in the chapter: above all, the guide adopts problematic and reductionist binary interpretations that are often used to speak about communist history and society (Yurchak, 2005, p. 5). For example, the guide builds his account of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and the subsequent influence of Stalinism in the country on the binary assumptions of "oppression" vs. "resistance", and as prominently, "oppressors" vs. "victims". Furthermore, I suggest that the binary of "repression" and "freedom"

is implicitly present in the way the guide regrets the fact that it was the USSR that liberated Czechoslovakia: his apparent sympathy for the Americans clearly contrasts with his negative attitude to the Soviet powers, which he constantly referred to as "the Russians" during the tour. Although he began to correct himself after I reminded him about the multinational character of the USSR, the corrections came with evident difficulty. From then on, he repeatedly stopped half-word while saying "the Russians." Therefore, I further suggest that the current politics, where Russia has replaced the Soviet Union as a cultural and political counterpart to the USA, may have influenced the guide's narrative. Thus, his representation of Prague's communist past partly results from the representations he received from education and the media: that is, the guide's own cultural background as shaped by his Czech upbringing. This partly supports Yurchak's statement that speaking about socialism in binary terms is a widespread phenomenon not only in the West, but among former Soviet countries as well: I suggest that it may be equally true for narratives shaped in satellite states (Yurchak, 2005, p. 5). Indeed, later in his work, Yurchak refers to an essay of Vaclav Havel to illustrate his theory (p. 17). It is also possible that the guide's narrative was shaped by the audience, which he seemed to have expected to consist of English-speaking nationals. Below, I demonstrate how the information delivers on guided tours affects binary representations of Prague's communist past in travel writings.

Guided Tours, Travel Bloggers, and Representation of the Local History

In Chapter II, where I discuss factors that shape travelers' imagination of the locals, I speak about media information that is incorporated in travelers' cultural and social background before the travel. In contrast, here I focus on how information about Prague's communist past given at the tour, rather than prior to it, shapes travel writing. There are several characteristics of the guides' knowledge that set it apart from the kinds of information I considered earlier: 1) it is

consciously sought for and usually desired by tour participants; 2) it is mediated by an individual (the tour guide), in a two-way communication exchange; 3) in the cases I consider, the information given and received during the tour is about history. Thus, the images guides communicate to travelers either overlap or contrast with those the visitors have received previously, from their own social background—in the case of communism in Prague which I focus on, it is possible to assume that most of the knowledge come from participants' own countries. Thus, in this chapter I demonstrate some of the ways in which cultural representation is mediated by tour guides, how it is filtered through the previously received information about Prague's history, and how it shapes the image of the city in the resulting blog post.

In the introductory vignette, the group of travelers who joined the tour consists almost entirely of citizens of English-speaking countries. Additionally, the fact that the guide was able to guess their nationalities indicates that it must be a common occurrence, and not an exception: he had mentioned that, for instance, there were usually "quite a few" British. Likewise, Caraba (2011) points out that the target of the communist heritage industry are western tourists. Therefore, my focus in this chapter is on representations of Prague and its people under communism in travel blogs. In this relation, I demonstrate how these images and representations are shaped by the bloggers' cultural experiences during travel—through guided tours.

Reductionist binary oppositions have proved prominent in the travel writings I examine. The strategy commonly used in the blog posts is to focus on the repressiveness of communism, rather than to discuss people's everyday experiences, which also included hope, human cordiality and comfort (Yurchak, 2005, p. 8). These binaries, however, are anything but simple and straightforward. For example, Richard in his retelling of Prague's history states that after receiving the majority of votes in an election, the communists "simply took everything they

could and wrested all possible power to the party". In reality, there was considerable resistance

to the party's rule among the Czechs, manifested, for instance, in Charter 77: this would not have

been possible if the state had indeed been totalitarian, as Richard implies. Thus, while the

"oppressor versus victim" binary remains true for the relationship between the locals and their

government under communism, such representation of it is reductive, if not false. Similarly, the

British blog writer Tom suggests that "communism scared people into behaving like the leaders

wanted them to" (Woods, 2016, para. 2). Furthermore, Tom writes that the citizens acted

according to the demands of their leaders under an "iron-fisted rule", while "all the power was at

the top" (para. 2, 6). This presents people in a reductive and binary light as passive victims,

without agency, being repressed by monolithic ruthless regime. Furthermore, he does not provide

any positive or value-free details about people's life during communism. Thus, the reductive

impression of the period as a dark one is achieved. Indeed, political idealism was extremely

strong in the communist Czech Republic, with speaking out against state being potentially

dangerous (Bolton, 2012, p. 3). However, the citizens were not passive victims: for example,

during the Prague Spring, it was the population of Czechoslovakia that "pressed [the political

leaders] for further liberalization" (Bolton, 2012, p. 6).

I suggest that these representations of Prague's history during communism are shaped by

the notions of what Yurchak (2005) terms "binary socialism." Yurchak's concept refers to the

tendency to describe socialism through binary categories such as "oppression and resistance,

repression and freedom, the state and the people […]", particularly in the West and the former

USSR (Yurchak, 2005, p. 5). Such representations are problematic, since they often distort the

reality: for instance, Yurchak notes that a lot of cultural phenomena in socialism that were

successfully produced and distributed as officially censored were very different from the

ideological texts of the ruling party (p. 6). Additionally, it simplifies the political and social processes that bring the party into power by seeing the state and the people as separate, if not antagonistic, entities. For example, the boundary between the state and the people is drawn in Richard's narrative: he writes that "the communists simply took everything they could and wrested all possible power to the party", and later in the article says that the communist regime needed to "control everything" through the means of secret police (Collett, 2015, para. 3-4). Similarly, Tom draws a clear division between "people" and "the leaders". However, as the example of the Prague Spring shows, there was some collaboration between the state and the citizens, so much so that they were able to resist the influence of the greater political power of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the bloggers' depiction of the communist state as consisting of two separate forces, one of them passive, the other one fully controlling the country, is reductive.

In this chapter, I have examined representations of Prague's communist past in travel blogs by the writers who took a guided tour of the city. I suggest that the combination of the knowledge the bloggers receive from their social background, media and education, and the guide's narrative shapes the writers' representations of Prague's past in their travel posts. On the one hand, Yurchak stresses that representations of socialism in binary terms prevail in narratives in the West and the former Soviet Union (Yurchak, 2005, p. 5). I have found it to be true for the information delivered by both the Communism & Nuclear Bunker Tour guides, through citations in bloggers' articles, and the guide on a "free walking tour", which I took as part of my fieldwork. The statement that there is a tendency to speak about socialism in binary terms in the West is confirmed by the following findings: 1) the group I joined for the tour mostly consisted of English speakers; 2) our Czech tour guide indicated that such composition of the group was accustomed; 3) out of eleven writers whose articles I examined, the only bloggers who chose to

take the Communism & Nuclear Bunker Tour were British. Thus, the narratives the writers receive from their cultural background, that is, education and media in their countries, is combined with binary representations of socialism by Czech guides. This, as I have demonstrated, results in representations of Prague's communist past that are highly reductive, with the represented phenomena being in fact more complex and context-bound.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have discussed practices of imagining places and local people, interaction with the locals, and construction of identities of travel bloggers through writing. While looking at these processes, I have focused on the role of identities of young travel writers such as tourist/traveler, their nationality, class, and gender. To conduct the research, I have relied on the following methods: 1) participant observation on fieldwork at weekly Couchsurfing meetups and at a free walking tour of Prague; 2) textual analysis of travel blogs, particularly articles describing the authors' trips to the Czech capital; 3) semi-structured interviews with the travel writers whose articles I examine. Through the combination of these, I have highlighted some of the ways in which identity of the travel writer shapes their communication with, perception and representation of the locality and its people. Additionally, I demonstrate how interaction with locals can be used by travel bloggers to self-identify as tourists or travelers.

In Chapter I, I show that information that is part of a traveler's cultural and social background can significantly influence their imagination of the host culture and local people. The categories of images I have found impactful include depictions of a destination in the mass media. Therefore, I used the example of Paris, widely represented in art and tourism advertisement in both Europe and America, to illustrate the significance of depictions travelers encounter in the media. Paris was also the only city repeatedly mentioned by the interviewees. In the bloggers' answers, it was widely associated with the Eiffel tower; some of the writers also mentioned the romantic ambiance of the city. Overall, they built their expectations of the destination on the images they had received from the mass-media, the exposure to which, in turn, results from their cultural and social position.

Moreover, I have found that nationality can have significant influence on travel bloggers' imagination of the host culture and its locals. The recent cultural past of one's homeland may shape expectations of people who share a similar background, as in the case of some of the Eastern European (the term used by M. Stoyanova in personal communication on May 14, 2018) bloggers who had expected the Czechs to be "like them" (E. Skalovskaia, personal communication, June 13, 2018). By contrast, the differing histories of the West and the Eastern bloc contribute into exoticization of the locals and their past by travel bloggers. In the same chapter I demonstrate how travel bloggers use the gap between their initial imagination of Prague and its locals, and their lived experience, to boost their relatability and credibility for their readers. By adopting contrast as a literary device, they construct or confirm their own identities as professional, "authentic", and trustworthy writers.

The question I address in the next chapter is how the (self-) separation of travelers from tourists is made meaningful by travel bloggers. The criteria suggested by my interviewees was as follows: travelers tend to go "off the beaten path" rather than focus their attention on popular sights, and they actively communicate with the local population. Therefore, two main indicators were chosen: the visitor's itinerary and their interaction with locals. Since building an itinerary demands knowledge, and acquisition of knowledge from the locals has played a prominent role in most interviews, I have concentrated on communication between travelers and locals. Thus, the research question I work with in the chapter is how tourist/traveler identity is constructed through interaction with the local people. Interestingly, I have not found any significant correlation between the writers' self-identification as travelers and patterns of their interaction with locals and their itineraries (interaction with the destination based on acquisition of "local knowledge"). Instead, the division proved to be hierarchical and status-bound: while some of the

respondents denied the validity of such distinction by calling it "snobbish" (T. Woods, personal communication, May 9, 2018) or saying that "we're all tourists" (M. Stoyanova, personal communication, May 14, 2018), none of them explicitly stated their identity as tourists. Furthermore, travelers were described as respectful, independent, and curious, while tourists "can't be bothered" (E. Skalovskaia, personal communication, June 13, 2018). These facts, combined with the inconsistencies between mobility and communication patterns of a prototypical traveler and actual behavior of the travel writers who identified as one, demonstrate how the positive implications of travelers' identity make it a desirable cultural good (Bourdieu, 1984). This explains why the majority of the travel writers whose articles I examine wish to avoid being identified as tourists.

Furthermore, in the final chapter of this thesis I examine the link between travelers' national identities, information they receive on guided tours, and representations of Prague's communist past in their blog posts. I have found both the bloggers' cultural background, as largely shaped by their nationality, and the guide's representations of communism, to be influential. The majority of the attendees on the tour where I conducted my fieldwork, as well as the bloggers who mentioned taking the Communism & Nuclear Bunker Tour, were nationals of English-speaking countries, while the guides on all tours were Czech. Basing my assumption on Yurchak's claim that binary representations of socialism are widespread in the West and former communist countries, I suggest the tendency among both groups to speak about the communist Prague in binary terms results partly from the participants and the guides' identities. Finally, in this chapter I show that such representations are reductive, since they often ignore the context of the events described, distort and seimplify the delivered information. Because of the limitations of this thesis, I have not been able to investigate narrative

patterns of non-Czech tour guides. Thus, I believe that it would be a useful extension to make for further research.

In summary, in this thesis I look at relationships between identities of young travel bloggers of European and American background, their mobility and communication patterns, and representations of the visited destination and its locals in travel articles. To do so, I have adopted (and adapted) methodological tools suggested by Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) such as writing "ethnographies of the particular", and collection of data through fieldwork, interviews and textual analysis. In other words, I have focused on particular phenomena such as guided tours, use of interaction with the locals as a tool of identity construction, and adoption of contrast as a literary device while describing the blogger's initial and post-travel imagination of the destination. Such approach have proved to be useful in avoiding generalization by allowing me to put travelers' actions in context. At the same time, it has let me study each of the practices described in-depth.

The significance of the results lies in bringing to light implications of the representations, since the image of the place created by travel bloggers is likely to influence their readers: for example, Gloria (Atanmo, 2015) lists the positive feedback from people she follows on social platforms as one of the reasons she chose to visit Prague. In other words, as Richardson (as cited in Santos, 2006) put it, "no textual staging is ever innocent"; cultural and social realities underlie depictions of a place. Correspondingly, the depictions may contribute to the reality of the readers.

Due to the limitations of my research, I suggest that it can be expanded by including locals' experience of the same processes: for instance, the way (non-) local tour guides represent the sight in their narrative; or how local residents interact with visitors of the city. A collection of

such works has been published in an anthology by Boissevain in 1984; however, it primarily focuses on reactions to mass tourism in non-metropolitan areas. Inclusion of cities, considering the vast popularity of city breaks and geographical proximity of European countries to each other, might bring out interesting similarities with the processes described in Boissevain's anthology, and provide insights about residents, visitors and what happens when their paths cross.

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