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The Tourism of the Authentic in a Rural Idyll:
The Case of a Family Organized Activity
in the South of France

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Master Thesis of Philosophy in Visual Anthropology

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"The Tourism of the Authentic in a Rural Idyll:
The Case of a Family Organized Activity
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SVF-3903 – From Fieldwork Experience to Ethnographic Film and Text

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Abstract

Ethnography is a multi-method human-conducted examination of what humans do, say, think and believe. As Sherry Ortner flawlessly explains: "ethnography has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self – as much of it as possible – as the instrument of knowing." (2006: 3) My thesis will be devoted to study how people experience alternative lifestyles and new ways of living in rurality, among nature and natural resources. We will meet a Parisian couple Yann and Corinne, with their two daughters, Emma and Camille who decided to move from Paris to the South of France in Eoulx. More precisely, the focus will be on the authenticity of my protagonists' approach – namely eco-tourism. Their story begins three years ago, when they decided to change their life and adopt an alternative lifestyle in the mountains, surrounded by animals and nature. My research starts there, when they decided to leave urban areas to go to what they imagined as being peaceful and natural rural environments: here is the story of a 'a journey to a rural idyll'. Mark Schucksmith stated: "Rural studies have highlighted a rural idyll as something to which many aspire, perhaps as a vision of a good place to live or as a repository of values." It is clear that Yann, Corinne and their two daughters pursued a 'Quest for Authenticity'[1] by thinking of the rural as being 'authentic' and 'refreshing'[2] compared to loud, polluted and sickening urban environments that they left. Indeed, this led them to migrate to the South of France and established an activity based on eco-tourism, namely 'Destination Ailleurs,' which aims at inviting their guests to a new destination.

Key words: Rural Idyll, Life migrations, Authenticity, Urban environment, Rural environment, Anthropology of Authenticity, Eco-Tourism, Tourism of the Authentic, Visual Anthropology, Ethnography

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[1] MacCannell's (1976)
[2] Notes taken from fieldwork.

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Introduction

Ethnography is a multi-method human-conducted examination of what humans do, say, think and believe. As Sherry Ortner perfectly explains: "ethnography has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self – as much of it as possible – as the instrument of knowing." (2006: 3) It is with this perspective of research that I aim at studying socio-anthropological concepts, such as ones which are rural migrations, authenticity and tourism. These predominant concepts will be at the center of my analysis.

It is usual to say that "documentation is used to support the meaning-making of the ethnographer about the meaning-making of the people under observation." (Jowsey, 2015: 1) Woods even argued that "the ethnographic method lends itself to observing the immediacy of people's experiences and 'seeing into the life of things.'" (Jowsey, 2015:1) Thus, social sciences have produced a broad and vast body of literature on the topic of authenticity. The latter in the context of tourism is the key concept of my analysis. It also appears that it is at the heart of the motivations for migrations.

My thesis will be devoted to study how people experience alternative lifestyles and new ways of living in rurality, among nature and natural resources. More precisely, the focus will be on the authenticity of my protagonists' approach – namely eco-tourism. With these concepts in mind, we will meet a Parisian couple Yann and Corinne with their two daughters, Emma and Camille who decided to move from Paris to the South of France in Eoulx.

My research revolves around diverse research questions. In this paper, we will try to answer queries such as: What is an alternative lifestyle? What pushed them to migrate internally? What were their motivations to start such a project? What *images* did they have of rural environments before moving out? What did they try to achieve with their project? What role authenticity has played in their activity? What challenges did they encounter?

Their story begins three years ago, when they decided to change their life and adopt an alternative lifestyle in the mountains, surrounded by animals and nature. The first interrogation that we will try to respond to is: what were the factors that pushed them to such a change? My research starts there, when they decided to leave urban areas and a loud and polluted city to go to what they imagined as being peaceful and natural rural environments: here is the story of 'a journey to a rural idyll.'

Academically, there is a small body of literature addressing urban to rural migrations and/or rural to rural migrations. Since increasing numbers of people left the cities and emerging environmental movements are growing, interests in the topic of migrations to rural areas are intensifying. One key aspect of our research is the image or representations of rural and urban areas people's mind. As Yarwood argued, "images are important because they both reflect and affect the ways in which the countryside is used by society. (2002) Furthermore, Mark Schucksmith stated: "Rural studies have highlighted a rural idyll as something to which many aspire, perhaps as a vision of a good place to live or as a repository of values." We will attempt to know whether this aspect is applicable in Yann and Corinne's case

It is easy to notice, as Halfacree claimed that "most people *feel* that there is a difference between urban and rural areas and behave accordingly." For instance, many people decided to move to the countryside or rural areas "because they *think* that it offers them a better quality of life, both environmentally and socially. (Halfacree, 1994)" (Yarwood, 2005: 20) This is what we will try to discover in this paper. It is clear that Yann, Corinne and their two daughters pursued a 'Quest for Authenticity'[3] by thinking of the rural as being 'authentic' and 'refreshing'[4] compared to loud, polluted and sickening urban environments that they left. Indeed, this led them to migrate to the South of France and started an activity based on eco-tourism, namely Destination Ailleurs, which aims at inviting their guests to a new destination, to somewhere else. By performing a family and endorsing the roles of hosts, they started a touristic activity that deserves, to my eyes, anthropological scrutiny.

Therefore, in the first section, we will consider the ethnographic context by defining the place, the actors and the fieldwork. We will see the importance of spatiality in an ethnographic research, and we will meet in greater details my protagonists and informants. Finally, we will define the approach of an ethnographic fieldwork and the challenges I encountered during my stay there.

In the second section, we will portray the theoretical approach of my research. We will elaborate on anthropological subjects: firstly, we will deepen the analysis on lifestyle migrations and their causes and will define the dichotomy between rural and urban places with the *images* attached to each concept. Secondly, we will elaborate on the implications of their initial motives through Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and will dive into the tourism of the authentic – one that is the

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[3] MacCannell's (1976)
[4] Notes taken from fieldwork.

core concept of Yann and Corinne's project. Thirdly and finally, we will develop further analysis on authenticity, performance and reciprocity in the context of tourism.

In the third section, we will establish the methodology adopted to pursue this research. Firstly, we will talk about the challenges that I encountered when finding the place and making the first contacts with my informants. We will then examine the use of camera during fieldwork and the possible challenges faced during my fieldwork. Then, we will review the different ethnographic methods that I used to gather information – specifically participant observation and ethnographic interviews. Finally, we will consider the role and importance of reflexivity in my research and I will reflect on my position as visual anthropologist.

In the last and fourth section, we will review anthropological literature and academics who wrote on subjects related to concept we have contemplated throughout the whole paper. This section is a review of empirical chapters. Firstly, we will deepen the discussion on the rural idyll that Yann and Corinne potentially imagined, and the rural ideal they created. Secondly, we will consider the role of authentic tourism in their activity. We will deepen their authentic approach by elaborating subjects such as performance, reciprocity and sincerity in the context of tourism. Finally, we will discuss the nature-culture dichotomy and we will consider a possible common ground through the eyes of authentic eco-tourism.

Ethnographic Context – Places, Actors and Fieldwork

In any ethnographic research, analysing the ethnographic context is of high importance. According to Trueba, "context, both in micro- and macro-ethnographic approaches, is meant to provide cues for the selection of 'relevant' features of behaviour vis-à-vis specific conceptual frames." (2013; 1) Contextualizing gives insights on the environment and its politico-economic background, but also on the location of the place and its actors. Contextualizing enables researchers to lead *efficient* ethnographic fieldworks by allowing them to have all important aspects of a social reality taken in consideration to understand it in all of its complexity. As Trueba concluded: "(..) the crux of contextualization and of ethnographic validity will remain the 'grounding' of our interpretation of behaviour in the observed empirical reality." (2013; 1).

i.   Spatiality – Locations and Places

Spatiality has an important role in any anthropological research. Some anthropologists argue that cultures and spaces seem to be intrinsically associated. According to McKenzie Aucoin, "the hermeneutic study of space explores space as a symbolic medium and recognizes that space and space language convey a culture's meaning about the immediate world, while place carries with it sentiments of attachment and identity that emerge out of lived experience." (2017;1) Thus, in any ethnographic research, the choice of spatiality is of huge significance. Moreover, it is argued that "ethnographically based spatial analyses can indeed yield insights into prejudices, inequalities and social exclusion as well as offering people the means for understanding the places where they live, work, shop and socialize." (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003: 1) For my research, the authenticity of the location has brought meaning to additional questionings that we will discuss further in this paper.

For my research paper, I have conducted the fieldwork in the South East of France. Due to COVID-19 the capacity to travel was rather disrupted and I was required to stay in my childhood's region, in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA), to pursue my master thesis research. What was particular in these conditions is that I was able to understand and analyse the place in all its subtleties. It is important to outline that I was not *an outsider* discovering a place and its people. I was born and raised in the region PACA. I knew the culture, the heavy tourism in certain areas, the touristic spots and even the non-touristic ones; I knew the mindset

well, the customs and the traditions. As French is my native language, I was able to communicate very easily and understand the 'slang' with its Italian influence, in certain places. For an ethnographer, there is no better condition to pursue a research. What is better than deepening what you are already familiar with? The understanding of the place and the people was maximal. Even though it is true that I was disappointed to cancel all of my initial plans during which I was traveling and discovering new places, I was actually excited about the idea of re-discovering *my* region and leading an anthropological research on a subject that I feel concerned about. It is true that I knew the area where I was going but I did not know the people who welcomed me nor the activity that they have established overtime.

My research is in Eoulx at a place called "Destination Ailleurs" run by Yann and Corinne Lespiat a Parisian couple who decided, three years ago, to change their life around and adopt a new and alternative lifestyle surrounded by nature.

The sign when entering the property "Destination Ailleurs"

Destination Ailleurs – also translated "Destination Elsewhere" in English – is located in a small hamlet called Eoulx approximately 10km far from Castellane surrounded by mountains and at an altitude of 1100m.[5] Eoulx is a town of Castellane and a former French commune, located in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence department in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region. The locality was attached to the municipality of Castellane in 1973.[6]

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[5] In the interviews I conducted and the different conversations that I had with him; Yann explained to me how high in altitude the camp was. In my notes and in the filmed interview, he mentioned the altitude.
[6] Wikipedia: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castellane

At the crossroads of the Alps and the Mediterranean, in the heart of the National Geological Reserve of Haute-Provence and the Regional Natural Park of Verdon, stopover town on the Route Napoléon and gateway to the famous Gorges du Verdon, Castellane is a dynamic and endearing city, skillfully combining the prosperity of its past, its tourist vocation and its many activities. With around 1,600 inhabitants, Castellane has the distinction of being the least populated sub-prefecture in France. This place is typically very touristic during summer. According to the Departmental Tourism Observatory, the tourist function is very important with more than 5 tourists welcomed per inhabitant, most of the accommodation capacity being commercial. Summer tourism, favored by the departure from the Gorges du Verdon, supplies many second homes, campsites and hotels: the population increases tenfold in summer.[7] Thus, the main activity is tourism. However, it used to be an agricultural place with large crops and resources. Twenty-one farms were installed in the municipality in 2010, a figure that has been declining continuously since 2000 (loss of four farms) and 1988 (twelve farms lost in 22 years). Currently, twelve farms specialise in sheep and horse breeding, and three in permanent crops (on plantations, such as lavender or arboriculture). Three other farms have retained a polyculture model. The agricultural area used, 713 ha, has fallen sharply, with more than a thousand hectares which have not been used for pasture since 2000. The area still in use is mainly used for livestock.[8]

The Gorges du Verdon, crossing the village Castellane and the many water activities attached to it.

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[7]Wikipedia: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castellane
[8] Wikipedia: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castellane

Overtime, it has been observed that many touristic activities – hiking centers, horse riding clubs, adventure parks, climbing clubs, cycling clubs, fishing clubs, water activities, etc. – and essentially different types of accommodations emerged around this place.

"Destination Ailleurs" is one of them. Nevertheless, to my eyes, the activity falls under the label of 'eco-tourism' as the managers do everything is their power to respect the environment, help local agriculture and short circuits, and share awareness on the importance to protect the environment. It is also important to note that Yann and Corinne took the decision to buy and run this business in 2017 in order to realise their dream: changing their life around to get a better quality of life. They had a rural ideal in their minds and were pursuing a rural idyll in which they were surrounded by mountains and silence. From this, they took risks and made everything they could to realise their couple's dream.

Castellane, the main village.

'Eoulx – Commune de Castellane' sign when entering the hamlet.

Yet, what exactly is "Destination Ailleurs"? It is first of all a place where guests feel somewhere else – in harmony with their environment. Thus, Destination Ailleurs offers comfortable accommodations, in Mongolian yurts at 1100m of altitude, at the gates of the Gorges du Verdon, the famous touristic site.

There are six yurts and one chalet on Yann and Corinne's land. Each yurt is fitted out to provide maximum comfort all year round: sheep wool provides natural and optimal insulation in summer and in winter. Each yurt has its own colour and each can welcome from 1 to 6 persons in it. They all have an adjoining private bathroom, including a shower cabin, sink and dry toilets. On the camp, the water is supplied by a natural source. It is 100% autonomous in water. In the bathrooms, there are dry toilets that are environmentally friendly as water is not wasted and is replaced by wood chips. The materials used make it an ecological and natural habitat. The round wooden structure and Mongolian paintings are *authentic* and aligned with the Mongolian culture. Finally, it is a participative work. Their two daughters participated in the paintings and the renovation of the Yurts. All the dwellings are authentic, made in Mongolia and assembled by Yann and his family on site with the help of volunteers.[9]

Moreover, they propose homemade meals, concocted by 'Cocotte' – a nickname for Corinne – with local and seasonal products. Meals are taken in their veranda on the panoramic terrace with a view of the surrounding landscape or are delivered in the yurts depending on the number of guests. For breakfast, they are served every morning at the guest convenience (between 8:30am and 10:00am). They offered a varied assortment of homemade jams (mirabelle, cherry, grape, peach, fig…) bread and pastries or cake, with teas, coffee, hot chocolate, etc. It is a very important aspect of the family's business, so all the products are from locals' productions – friends' crops sometimes – fresh and/or homemade. Finally, the place shelters some rescue animals; mainly goats, dogs, hens, roosters… Yann and Corinne started a pedagogical farm with which guests can interact and learn about their behaviours, personalities, needs, etc. They argued that it is a good way for guests' children to familiarize themselves with animals that they are not used to see, learn how to feed them, to take care of them, etc. This part of the activity is usually led by their daughters Emma and Camille who I observed, absolutely love to take care of their animals.

Usually, when Yann and Corinne welcome guests at Destination Ailleurs, Yann brings them for a little walk around his land. They can see their beehives, some additional accommodations

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[9] Information gathered during fieldwork, captured with images – Somewhere Else film.
But also on their website: https://www.destination-ailleurs04.com/

and projects they have, but also some crops around the land. Yann and Corinne make their own honey and grow their vegetables with small permaculture crops – as far as they can as they have the capacity to host up to 20 people but cannot feed as many people with their own production only. The business is well-run, and they do everything on their own, which means they are *almost* self-sufficient. They only have an extra worker during summer – for the peak season – that they host for free for two or three months. Accordingly, I came to my informants' place during the peak season and there was another person working with them, helping them with daily tasks such as cleaning the yurts every day, gardening and outdoors management. However, she refused to be filmed or to contribute to this research. Hence, she will not be a protagonist in my research although she worked hard and helped Yann and Corinne during all my stay.

ii.   Informants – The Protagonists of my research thesis and film

In traditional anthropological field research, key informants are used primarily as a source of information on a variety of topics, such as kinship and family organization, economic system, political structure and religious beliefs and practices. More particularly, an informant is a person who has specialised knowledge and/or expertise about a particular culture or member of a group. Researchers identify informants early on during the research process as a means of gaining access, information, and ongoing feedbacks during the collection and gathering of data for interpretation. To sum up, in an ethnographic research, a key informant is simply someone who, by virtue of his particular position in the society, knows a lot about the subject of the research. His role is to inform the researcher.

As mentioned above, the protagonists and informants of my research are a family of four: the couple Yann and Corinne Lespiat and their two daughters, Emma and Camille Lespiat.

Corinne Lespiat on the left, and Yann Lespiat on the right, during the interview.

By interacting with them, talking about their past, their experiences and future projects, but likewise bonding with them, I was able to know them in depth and have a global picture of their lives. I observed certain personality traits that they have and their roles in their familial activity. I was able to understand their motivations, their philosophy of life, their visions for the future and the relationship they have altogether. By connecting with them, they were opened enough to let me in in their respective life and they enable me to draw certain patterns on their personalities, their behaviours, their culture and traditions, their hobbies and their habits. It is mainly by talking about their past that I was able to understand what led them to where they are today.

Camille Lespiat, 10 years old.

Emma Lespiat, 13 years old.

In the interview that I had with them on the last day, they told me that they all lived in Paris for most of their lives. It is only three years ago that they decided to move to the South East of France in order to run Destination Ailleurs. For them, as I explained previously, it was a way to concretise their mutual dream.

To draw the picture, Yann is a 40 years old man and Corinne is a 42 years old woman, both from the region Ile-de-France. They met when they were studying 'Management & Accounting' at the university in Paris. After their studies, they were able to get banking jobs from which they climbed the ladder. They explained to me that, at this point, they were quite successful and were well-earning their lives. They then got married and at one point, they wanted to have children to make a family. They had two daughters, Emma a 13 years old girl, and Camille a 10 years old girl, both born in Paris. Both girls lived in Paris for all their lives until three years ago, when they left all their friends, habits, hobbies, customs, etc. behind them, to move to the South East of France, in Eoulx. Both girls go to school in the nearest villages, but they were telling me during fieldwork that when Emma will be old enough to go to high school, she will have to stay in a boarding school. They explained that the nearest high school is in Digne-les-Bains, a city two hours far from where they live. A journey that Yann and Corinne "cannot drive every morning and every evening"[10] as they told me.[11]

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[10] Notes taken during fieldwork.
[11] Information gathered during fieldwork, captured with images – Somewhere Else film.

The Lespiat family taking their breakfast.

My informants were really welcoming. Their daughters were interested in my project, my personality and my role right away. It was easy to socialise and make friends with them. My age was a facilitator to create strong bonds with their two daughters. In a moment during which I was playing with them, I remember Emma and Camille confessing to me that they considered me as "an older sister."[12] Their parents trusted me very early and bonds were easy to create as they are both two very opened persons.

This was something I was quite surprised by since I am used to what I call "the French mentality or mindset" which is, in general, relatively narrowminded, folded in on themselves and usually irritated by tourism – in the case of native people living in the South East of France, particularly affected by tourism in hot seasons. More largely, it is easy to contend that French people have their own way of living and thinking. Some clichés followers would argue that French people can be resumed by a baguette, a beret and a singing language with a lot of onomatopes. Yet, as far as I am concerned and because I have traveled quite a lot in my life, I believe there is a "French mentality/mindset" closely related and emanating to the living conditions and the French education. In 2013, Jamie Doward and Hussein Kesvani for the Guardian wrote an article about it. They argue that: *"France, once famous for its joie de vivre is suffering from existential gloom (…). Research by a French academic to be delivered to the Royal Economic Society suggests that the country's citizens are "taught" to be miserable by elements of their own culture."* They continued: *"Claudia Senik, a professor at the Paris School of Economics, argues that her country's education system and its cultural "mentality" make the French far*

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[12] Notes taken during fieldwork.

less happy than their wealth and lifestyle suggest they should be." Some studies suggest that *"there is something in the culture that makes French people miserable, claims Senik."*[13]

This low level of happiness in France could be caused by a failing and unstimulating education. It means that at early ages, French children and adolescents are not guided the right way towards adulthood. A low level of happiness equals folding in and introversion. Finally, this equals a general narrowminded mentality and a non-openness to other people and culture. Thus, although I was prepared to face this kind of reluctancy, my informants were the total opposite of it. Initially, when I arrived for the first time at their place, this was one aspect of their behaviours, i.e. their relationship and approach to their guests, that I absolutely adored and wanted to study more.

Additionally, it is important to underline the roles of every of my informant in their activity. In anthropology research, it is customary to separate status and role within dynamic aspects, such as social roles. Every role has structure and agency – status being the rights and duties, therefore the agency, and role being the practice, therefore the structure. Everyone is a social person encountering social situations. Yet, we all have proper different status attached to our social reality; we can be a mother and a student, or a grandmother and a CEO, or all of them at once. Every role established has a facade, or a mask to put on. In visual anthropology research, what can be captured is a role dilemma.

In regard to my informants, I observed that they both are parents and managers, and their daughters also participate to their activity. They are almost considered as *workers* amongst them. In fact, all of them are like a symphony: everything is coordinated around their role within the family and the activity. Corinne is in the kitchen and cook food for their guests; while Yann takes care of the yurts and other dwellings, the outdoors activities (beekeeping, gardening, building things, etc) and other replacements, and essentially the relationship with the guests the family welcome. In short, Yann does the talking: he advises the guests where to hike, where to shop, what to do, what to see; he talks about the history of their place, of the hamlet, and of the villages nearby; he talks about the yurts and the chalet; about their future plans, their relationship to nature, to people and to life in general; he expresses his love for his animals, how they saved them from slaughterhouse; he tries to sensitise people about ecological issues

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[13] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/mar/24/french-taught-to-be-gloomy#:~:text=France%2C%20once%20famous%20for%20its,presented%20in%20London%20next%20month.&text=The%20French%20enjoy%20a%20high%20standard%20of%20living%2C%20Senik%20notes.

and explains their positions on such issues; he mentions also the origin of their products, their vegetables and fruits, their meat, their dairy, etc. To my eyes and of what I was able to observe, Yann has the 'leader role' in the activity, and it seems that he is the front light of Destination Ailleurs, while Corinne prefers staying in the shadow.

Yann guiding guests and showing his land in the mountains.

Yann getting the fruits and vegetables from the local market.

Corinne cooking for the guests and Emma helping her.

However, Corinne's role is as essential as Yann's. She co-manages Destination Ailleurs; she participates in different activities on the land, such as cleaning the dwellings, welcoming guests, cooking, etc. But I observed that she prefers staying in the back where she feels "more comfortable"[14] as she explained to me. Yann and Corinne's roles are both connected and interdependent as they both manage DA. Yann loves to communicate directly with people to share knowledge and skills, whilst Corinne prefers sharing with people through what she makes, such as well-presented dishes, homemade jams and cakes, plates of fruits, of cheese, etc. This is the way it is because Corinne's personality is more discrete and timider than Yann's – at least this is what I observed and concluded after a week spent with them. Both of their roles are, to my eyes, very archetypal. I wonder if these roles were established because of old, anchored and subconscious fundamental beliefs on the position of women and men in the society and within a household. The woman, the discrete and fragile, prepares the food and work in the shadow, while the man, the front face, takes care of the logistic and the people. I would not be surprised if that was the case. Note that I am not arguing that Yann and Corinne took these roles relatives to their gender in a consciously way. Yet, I wonder if it is the result of a long and lasting conditioning in regard to the position of women and men in society, and their view on a traditional family.

Concerning their children, they are the ones who take care of the animals and show the guests and their children (if any) how to do it. They are the ones who show the place to the guests

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[14] Notes taken during fieldwork.

where the yurts are and where the animals are sheltered. Emma and Camille, as I observed, have the 'emotion role' and 'entertaining role' if I may call it that way. They tend to add emotions such as tenderness and cuteness, but also entertainment to the experience of DA. Usually, guests are touched and amused by their active and participating roles in their activity.

Camille helping her dad to clean the Yurts in the morning.

Emma and Camille helping to make the camp welcoming.

Camille taking the goats to their shelters for the night.

iii. An Ethnographic Research – Fieldwork at "Destination Ailleurs"

According to O'Reilly, "ethnography should be informed by a theory of practice that understands social life as the outcome of the interaction of structure and agency through the practice of everyday life." (2012; 1) Thus in any ethnographic research, the practice of everyday life is central and allows the researcher to experience the reality of their protagonists in its full picture. By being and following their informants in their daily life, the researcher is no longer looking at abstract theories, rather they experience tangible practice. This shift in comprehension is fundamental and enables access to more information than mere academism.

Thus, my research thesis is supported by observations gathered during fieldwork. Fieldwork enables to fully experience information and allows to know my informants in depth. As I follow them in their daily life for a period of time, focusing on their realities and analysing their everyday life experiences, their interactions and potentially their vision, it becomes possible and more accurate to study them. Accordingly, Frederik Barth wrote: *"It is by attending systematically to people's own intentions and interpretations, accessible only if one adopts the perspective of their concerns and their knowledge of constraints under which they act, that one can unravelling the meaning they confer on events, and thereby the experience they are harvesting."* (1993; 105)

Besides this, I believe essential to outline the role of the protagonists in the research. They give meaning to their experiences through representations, images, emotional responses and

cognitive understanding. Comprehensively, Norman Long explained that *"social life is composed of multiple realities, which are, as it were, constructed and confirmed primarily through experience, this interest in culture must be grounded methodologically in the detailed study of everyday life, in which actors seek to grapple cognitively and organizationally with the problematic situations they face."* (2000; 189) This statement puts the experience and observations of their individualities as a key concept of analysis. Although in traditional academic research, it is usually asked to the researcher to neutrally *withdraw* from their own study to give space to the reflection, the thought process and the arguments, one can argue that the participation and the role of the ethnographer in fundamental in a research. In searching the role of an ethnographer within anthropological research, Hammersley and Atkinson concluded that: *"Ethnography usually involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry."* (2007; 3)

Nonetheless, Henry F. Wolcott (2002) distinguished two types of ethnographic fieldwork: "doing fieldwork" and "being in fieldwork." According to Castañeda, the first one refers to activities and practices that are based in immersion, while the second suggests research activities "that rely upon rapid, extensive, and comprehensive investigations of the surface of phenomena on relatively large (or larger) scale with methods such as surveys, questionnaires, sampling that can be applied without the intensive immersion and *in situ* dwelling of doing fieldwork." (2006; 76) The importance here lays in the analytical distinction that identifies two sides of research and allows for an analysis of the ontological performativity of fieldwork.

In my case, as COVID-19 fragilised plans of any ethnographic research, I was able to "do fieldwork" to quote Wolcott, however my immersion was only for a week. It was impossible for me to stay more due to the peak season and their need to work full time to (re)dynamise their activity – especially after the difficult period of quarantine. I extensively talked with my informants about the length of my stay and their availabilities. We agreed on the fact that because I could not stay more than a week, I had to come here every day from 8am to 8pm. This short immersion unequivocally limited me to analyse certain aspects of my research. Nevertheless, it was an intense week during which my immersion was even deeper than if I had stayed a month: due to the limited time, everything was intensified, even the bonds we have

created during this short time. Furthermore, because I am French and originally from the region PACA, as I previously explained, I was familiar with the region, the language, the people, the customs, the traditions, etc. To be short, I knew Castellane well. Thus, for me, the codes and norms here were not a discovery and not even unsettling. There, my capacity to understand social situations was efficient, so a short immersion did not really affect the validity of my research nor the ontological performativity of my fieldwork. I will extend on this aspect of my research further on in this paper, in the reflexivity section.

Lespiat's house and the place where guests are welcomed.

The Yurts and the land of the Lespiat's family – the place where my fieldwork was.

Theoretical Approach

In definition, a theoretical approach begins with "a conceptualization of how or why something or someone behaves or presents in a certain way, formalizes and interprets the basis and expected outcomes for these observations and then through investigation or applied principles demonstrating these ideas, an attempt is made to replicate the outcome, event or behavior." (Innab, 2020)[15] It is relevant to say that often, things work in theory but vary in the real world. My approach will be split into three parts in which three anthropological concepts will be deepened: Lifestyle migrations, Tourism and Authenticity.

i.   Lifestyle migrations: Urban vs Rural environment

As I explained in a section above, it is clear that Yann and Corinne Lespiat had a precise idea in mind, like a source of motivation, before moving to the South with their daughters. Former bankers, they used to live in urban environments, in a metropole and the capital of France, Paris. From a saturated city, they decided to migrate internally to rural environment with a precise idea in mind, one that would make them think that they will have a better quality of life. In this section, we will attempt to lay out the possible reasons which have led this Parisian family to fly to other horizons and change their lifestyle drastically. So as to understand why Yann, Corinne and their two daughters migrated to a rural area and what drove them to this decision, I believe important to get a better grasp of *the idea* that they had in mind and *the image* that the rural settings imply and involve.

Universally, one can argue that when people have ideas, they have a representation of what the idea means and what it is correlated to in their minds. According to preferences, previous experiences and many other factors, people are more likely to have predetermined ideas on certain concepts with an *image* of it. For example, if I had to ask you these questions: "Where do you want to live? In urban or rural settings? In the city or in the countryside?", it would solicit you to form an idea on both concepts and their differences. From then, you would choose what is your favorite according to what it involves. By pure deduction, the concepts of urban setting and rural setting would collide against each other as it seems that they are dichotomic.

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[15] Definition found on a website: Quora. Definition written by Raida Innad in 2020:
https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-meaning-of-theoretical-approach

What exactly is an urban environment? What does it refer to? What is a rural setting? What does it refer to? As Paul Cloke even wrote: "the distinction of rurality is significantly vested in its oppositional positioning to the urban." (2006; 18)

At a first glance, one could argue that cities are where everything happens. They are the center of industrial production, center of social, economic and political activities. They are like control centers of many human dynamics. Some authors argued that: *"While cities before were centers of industrial capitalist production, cities today are not only centers of these activities but have been rediscovered both as a) important nodes or 'basing' point for the economy of global flows and as b) 'coordinates' of the entrepreneurial state responding directly to the situated needs of global capital. As regards the first role, cities are control centers of interlocking globalizing dynamics of financial markets, producer services industries, corporate headquarters and associated service industries (telecommunications, business conferences, transport, poverty development, etc). Regarding the second function, cities act as economic motors. They act as knowledge base."[16]*

On the other hand, rural environments refer to green spaces and natural resources. They are the places where animals live, where agricultural activities prosper and where resources are cultivated. Pam M.S.N. defined rural environment as being *"surroundings generally identified by open terrain and limited habitation; distant from metropolitan areas and urban centers; with an economic system which is typically centered on agriculture but could instead be dependent on other forms of commercial activities, including logging, mining, fossil fuel and natural gas exploration, or tourism." (2013)*[17]

Yet, more generally, people conceptualize these complex concepts more simply: they imagine urban settings as being loud, busy and polluted, while rural environments are calm, peaceful and healthy. Michael Woods affirmed that the distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' might have begun when the towns were enclosed and defensible spaces as opposition to open and wild spaces that existed outside. He argued that these ideas soon "acquired greater symbolic significance as they became embedded in language and culture." (2001; 3)

Therefore, it appears that images of urban and rural environments are formed; first, through experiences; and second, through stories and images shaped by others. (Veraart, 2013) Usually and more generally, it is also how opinions are formed; by personal experience and expertise,

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[16] https://blablawriting.com/what-is-rurality-and-urbanity-essay
[17] Pam M.S.N. wrote an article in 2013: https://psychologydictionary.org/rural-environment/

and by being influenced by 'thought trends' from the other people and group of people. Correspondingly, it is not uncommon to see in supermarkets and other stores gardening tools, natural and wooden interior design, country clothing associated to rural settings. Overall, it looks that the wide accepted general idea of rurality is correlated to nature. In contrast, the wide accepted general idea of urbanity is correlated to culture – as art, technology, architecture, customs and markets reside in urban areas. Stems from this the known and controversial nature-culture dichotomy. This aspect will be elaborated later on in the paper.

Thus, it seems that the conceptualization of different environments and the ideas that some concepts generate play a predominant role in answering the question: "where would you live?" Henceforth, it is clear that the different reasons that push people to migrate to the countryside reside in the representation of it, namely nature and healthiness being at the center. In our research, Yann and Corinne migrated from Paris to Eoulx, two places that appear to be fundamentally opposed. One is a metropole and the capital of France whilst the second is a small hamlet located in altitude. Before going in depth, I wish to outline the possible motives for such an internal migration.

The first motive stems from environmental movements. With this growing awareness and the climate change crisis that we experience worldwide – with global warming, deforestation, toxic mass consumption, endangered species, severe ecological and social crises etc. – it is not surprising to observe 'alternatives way of life' emerging. Alternative lifestyles that would be more respectful and less impactful on the environment. For example, eco-villages and their movement – which is a relatively new phenomenon, firstly formalized in the 1990s. More and more people become aware that our resources are limited, and more and more people are willing to change their lifestyle so as to impact less. All of these directives are solely based on the principle of sustainability. According to Dias, Loureiro, Chevitarese and Souza: *"sustainability is fundamentally related to temporal continuity and, consequently, refers to responsibility of action. It not only looks towards future generations, but also to the present, and not only towards humanity as a single species in isolation, but also a part of a complex geo-biophysical system."* (2017; 1)

Thus, eco-villages and intentional communities are at the heart of a more global movement: environmental movements aiming at protecting lands, wildlife and biodiversity. Initially, eco-villages are defined as being "human settlements which fit to their natural environment most efficiently and without doing any harm." (2017; 36) So as to achieve these goals, Judit Farkas

outlined that: *"Their inhabitants farm without chemicals, use environmentally sound technologies for building, waste management and water treatment, relying on renewable energy resources in the process. Consumption is characterized with frugality, which includes the recycling principle, in addition to sparing use of natural resources. They wish to earn a living, entertain and trade locally. They are communities striving for autonomy and self-sufficiency, the purpose of which is to "get detached from the umbilical cord," i.e. to get rid of the various networks causing dependence and helplessness, be they social, infrastructural or economic networks."* (2017; 36)

In the majority, eco-villages are 'created communities' in the sense that it is a rural community set up by the conscious and common efforts of a group of individuals. In general, the number of inhabitants varies, it can go from 10 to 500 people. In addition to a eco-responsible thought, most of such initiatives are founded on some other types of ideology, such as religion or spiritualism. This means that they are also driven by a faith in another form of ideology – different to the one which overconsumes and destroys the planet out of domination, power and property. (Farkas, 2017) In regard to the intentions of eco-villages inhabitants, Farkas detailed that: *"Even though eco-village dwellers (in fact, anybody moving to the countryside under the drive of ideological principles) are rather seen by the mainstream as emigrants and the move is interpreted as fleeing, eco-villagers protest against the stigma and they consider themselves not as* utopian fugitives *(Litfin 2011:136), but as participants of the world deeply embedded in the social-ecological system. As autonomous communities, they find that various forms of resistance might be important in case of necessity, but they still are rather proactive communities, which – instead of protesting only – are looking for viable alternatives of everyday life, leading to the common good in the wider sense of the word (Litfin 2011:9; Pickerill – Chatterton 2006:737). Most of them wish to be a role model: they formulate themselves as models of a more lovable, more humane and in particular on the long term more sustainable form of life."* (2017; 37)

However, Liftin argued that "ecovillages are not *the* answer to the sustainability crisis. They are just *one* answer – and we need all the answers we can get." (2011; 139) Thus, sustainability ideals and practices of intentional small community based on the desire to be closer to nature and a 'responsible' eco-friendly lifestyle are more and more a source of motivation for internal and international urban-rural migrations.

The second reason for migrating to rural settings, related to the case of my informants, is the desire to connect to natural places and resources – which is something one does not have the possibility to do when living in the city. They relocate themselves in search of a better way of life. (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009) Usually, lifestyle migrants intend their migration as an enhancement of their way of life, which is measured by consumption. (Benson, 2013)

It is clear that when observing Yann and Corinne path, from their former life to their current one, they had a positive – almost heavenly – image on rural settings. For them, it was like 'a liberation' and 'a new breath'[18] as if they were completely muffled by their former urban settings and were suffocating.

One could argue that this behaviour, and what one could perceive as 'a malaise', comes from a general lack of connection with nature, an overdose of a toxic lifestyle proper to cities and urban areas – what they refer to as 'a rat race'[19]: a way of life in which people are caught up in a viciously competitive battle for wealth and/or power. Therefore, this factor resides in the personal desire to feel more connected to green and natural spaces. This category of people who make this choice do not want to join an intentional community; they just want to have a better-quality life surrounded by nature rather than buildings. Comprehensively, authors have long argued on the need of natural places and their preservations, but also on the consequences of a modern industrialised thought in modern societies: *There is a common recognition around the world that the diversity of life involves both the living forms (biological diversity), and the world views and cosmologies of what life means (cultural diversity) (Posey, 1999; Berkes et al., 2000; Maffi, 2001; Harmon, 2002). The importance of this diversity is increasingly recognised, as is knowledge of this diversity, even in industrialised societies where it is often heavily depleted (e.g. Mabey, 1997; Cocker & Mabey, 2005), and in urban areas where people are often disconnected from their traditional natural resource base (Cocks & Dold 2000, 2004, 2006; Wiersum & Shackleton 2006). However, the division commonly made between nature and culture is not universal, and, in many cases, is a product of modern industrialised thought shaped by our need to control, or 'manage' nature (Berkes, 2008).* (Authors, 2008; Intro)[20]

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[18] Notes taken during fieldwork.
[19] Subtitles from film and notes taken during fieldwork.

[20] Pretty, J., Adams, B., Berkes, F., Ferreira de Athayde, S., Dudley, N., Hunn, E., Maffi' Kay Milton, L., Rapport, D., Robbins, P., Samson, C., Sterling, E., Stolton' Kazuhiko, S., Tsing, A., Vintinner, E. Pilgrim, S. (2008) "How do biodiversity and culture intersect?"

Thus, more and more people migrate to rural areas with a hope of better living conditions, less polluted, more connected to the living world and more aligned with their inner selves. Some of them even ally this motive with a desire to be more eco-responsible, as both lifestyles are fundamentally compatible.

ii.   Tourism – Habitus and Rural Authenticity

Now we have highlighted the possible reasons for a rural migration in the context of a change of lifestyle related to the case of my informants, I believe important to elaborate the implications of such motives. Over the last past three years, Yann and Corinne have built, what one could call 'the tourism of the authentic.'[21] Before going into depth, I deem useful to establish some definitions so as to get a clearer view on the subject. Evidently, 'the authentic' refers to authenticity, and the term authenticity in anthropology often means something that is 'real', 'genuine', and 'true'. In the Oxford English Dictionary, authenticity is defined as "possessing original or inherent authority," and associated to this, as "acting of itself, self-originated."[22]

Thus, authenticity has a predominant role in studying the motivations of a lifestyle migration. According to Benson, who has studied lifestyle migrations from Britain to the Lot in France in an article named "Living the 'Real' Dream in La France Profonde: Lifestyle Migrants and the Ongoing Quest for the Authentic", the comparison that one does between life in cities and the potential life in more rural areas, presented in justification of their choice to migrate, "reflect the dualism that lies at the core of MacCannell's (1976) 'quest for authenticity.'" Accordingly, authenticity, understood as it is, gains meaning through contrasts with the superficiality of urbanity, and more generally, of modernity. As we argued previously, 'the rat race' brandished by modern and industrialised societies is more than ever synonym of inauthenticity, as it gains contrasts over the years with a simpler way of life in the countryside. As Benson argued, "the modern world is thus characterized by feelings of inauthenticity, and the tourist is driven to (re)construct meaning in an era of instability and fragmentation." She further sustained, "tourism may therefore allow for people to seek and perhaps reclaim what modernity has lost and destroyed (Cohen 1988, MacCannell 1992, Lindholm 2002)." (Benson, 2013; 507)

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[21] Harkin, 1995

[22] Oxford English Dictionnary definition: https://www.studymode.com/essays/Authenticity-In-Anthropology-60944440.html

However, the anthropologist's work is to study the implications of such beliefs. The role of any researcher is to look for the origin of a thought process, the latter being the predisposed and preconditioned ideas on urban and rural areas and on the city and the countryside. It is undeniable that at the roots of any belief system, lies the process of categorizing things through authentic symbols and signs. It seems that all these beliefs associated to the choice of lifestyle migrations come from *habitus.*

Bourdieu's notion of habitus appears to be at the foundation of all form of beliefs and conditioning. According to him, "habitus is a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking. Or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" (2002; 27-28) In greater details, they are: *"systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them"* (Bourdieu 1979; 53).

By that, Bourdieu means that the habitus being the reflection of a social world, is adapted to it and allows the agents, without them needing to undertake a conscious 'tactical' reflection, to respond immediately and without even reflect on the events they face. For example, for a study on 1960s food preferences in France, Bourdieu associated preferences for charcuterie, pork, pot au feu and cassoulet to working class, as it was custom to eat this in this class *milieu.*[23] For clerks and teachers, their preferences tended to be towards Italian and Chinese cooking, very healthy food or curry, as they are positioned at the top of the social class ladder and have the possibility to eat rich, diverse and healthy food.

With this example, it is thus clear to see how the notion of *habitus* is a built-in, subconscious way to perceive and categorize things in the world, through the eyes of one's education, past experiences and social norms. It structures our tastes and preferences, actions and opinions. Accordingly, this is what drove such categorizations on food and class status. These are completely arbitrary distinctions, only designed to assert and/or confirm status and/or power. Andrew Potter even argued that authenticity, "when we take a closer look at many supposedly

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[23] Study found in : Bourdieu, P. (1979) *La Distinction : Critique sociale du Jugement.*

'authentic' activities such as loft-living, ecotourism, or the slow-food movement, we find a disguised form of status-seeking." (2010: 15) Accordingly, if *habitus* is a reflection of the social world and a form of conditioning inscribed in our innate-selves throughout all our lives – influenced by others and inherited from the past – it means that, in the context of lifestyle migrations, the ideas of authentic associated to rurality are constructions and arbitrary distinctions existing with the only aim at disguising a form of status. Evidently, all these processes are subconscious and carried out by everyone in society without agent even knowing these injunctions.

With this concept in mind, the analysis of the tourism of the authentic becomes sharper. In this rendering, it appears that authenticity is embedded in the migrant's understanding of the destination. As we highlighted previously in the paper, the appropriation of rural France as the rural idyll (Buller and Hoggart, 1994; Barou and Prado, 1995) does an efficient work for the migrants as they look for an authentic living. Buller and Hoggart described rurality as *"an idealised rural form… the principal components of which appear to be the maintenance of traditional values, the existence of viable and genuinely welcoming rural communities, a slower 'pace of life' and an enhanced 'quality of life.'"* (1994; 128) Benson argued that *"the presentation of rural France as the rural idyll and the perception that a better way of life is available there, are ways in which the migrants are able to rationalize and justify their decision to migrate."* She further went on *"the classed history of tourism to rural France, a destination popular with the middle and upper classes further supports this association."* (2013; 507) Accordingly, owning and living in a house in the countryside of France – especially in the South of France as it is clearly one of the most coveted regions of France for its weather and the quality of life – would equal one who owns and lives a big traditional Parisian flat in the center of Paris. (Little 1986, Phillips 1998a, 1998b) These statements show the thin correlation between the idyll representations of rural areas in people minds – through habitus – and a desire to change a lifestyle and migrate, but it also shows how the notion of habitus can influence class *milieu*'s preferences and taste for the authentic.

Thus, the premises central to the migrants' ideas about the life in rural environment in France are identifiable as significant elements of authenticity. Due to their recourse to joint imaginaries about life in rural defines the authentic as fixed, still and invariable as intrinsic to life in rural France. In the field of tourism, scholars such as Tiberghien, Bremner and Milne argued that *"an important aspect of the tourism experience for visitors when they visit culturally, and*

environmentally remote regions is the perceived authenticity of what they see. Authenticity is constructed in multifaceted ways according to the various tourism stakeholders involved in the politics of commodification as well as the tourist consuming the image (Silver, 1993). From the visitors' perspective, authenticity is seen as an element for satisfying their desire to experience the genuine, the timeless and the unchanged in remote regions of the world. What tourists usually see is the performative aspect of local cultures – a 'performed authenticity' created, staged and carried out for external consumption (MacCannell, 1976)." (2017; 2)

Moreover, as various scholars have argued, the rural idyll has even more significance, "it is a notion that has long influenced romantic renderings of authenticity in the Western world (Cohen 1988, Bruner 2005, Lindholm 2008)." (Benson 2013: 510) In their description, Rapport and Overing highlighted the narrow link between rural idyll and authentic values: *"In a quest for the rural idyll there are clear overlaps with those of pilgrimages made by tourists and the religious (to name but two), in search of particular "authentic" values. Certain localities are set aside and seen as privileged sites for the attaining of experiences which are not only clearly distinct form current, everyday life but also of superior value."* (2000; 320)

The authentic is thus presented as 'real life'; and to the eyes of Yann and Corinne 'real life' is located in the rural south of France, in Eoulx; as Lindholm (2008) argued, it is not elsewhere but rather an identifying characteristic of their idyll destination. I cannot help but noticing the thin correlation with their project that they named 'Destination Ailleurs' – translated 'Destination Elsewhere' or 'Destination Somewhere else' – and their initial quest for authenticity. The choice that they made when naming their project is nothing but the realisation and the manifestation of their desire to find authenticity in their lives. Originally, in the context of lifestyle migrations, relocation can be understood as being a full transformation in the individual's life, and a self-realisation. (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009) One realises their life do not suit their expectations in their current settings, therefore one wants to accomplish themselves in other different settings, i.e. in 'authentic' settings. Once one is relocated, it is only logical to conceive that one wants to share their findings and inspire others to do the same. To my eyes, there are different ways to do this; as mentioned above, there are intentional communities. Likewise, eco-touristic projects are another *sustainable* way to share their findings and encourage people to do the same. Correspondingly, Benson argued that *"migration should therefore be understood as part of a greater project of self-realization, as migrants seek to better understand themselves and variously articulate and perform their identity in different contexts (Benson 2011)."* (2013; 507)

iii.   Authenticity – Performance and Reciprocity

When considering authenticity in contexts such as tourism and lifestyle migrations, relevant and noteworthy anthropological concepts to look at are performance and reciprocity within touristic places and activities.

Generally, it is argued that performance can be found in everything that composes an 'interactional ritual.' (Goffman, 1967) In the context of tourism and hospitality, performance refers to "the expected display of behaviour by host and guest: the perception, considerateness, deference and demeanour that accompany the social interaction." (Heuman 2005: 411) It is a cooperation of the inter-personal level via the dynamic 'host-guest.' One can argue that it is very important to appreciate performance in the perception of authenticity of the travel experience. Consequently, Knudsen and Waade claimed that "whether one is a performing body or city/region/country, it is possible to authenticate sites, sights, places and to enhance the tourists'/travellers' understanding and their sense of intimacy, self-reflection and feelings toward their surroundings." (2010: 2) Accordingly, Yann and Corinne, as I previously highlighted, perform perfectly for their guests – as individuals with a lot of empathy, skills and knowledge that they give and share, but also as a traditional family with social roles. When coming to Destination Ailleurs, guests not only visit, live and sleep in a yurt, they penetrate into their family life and intimacy. Although Yann and Corinne are adamant to say that professional and personal life are separated and distinct, their family life occurs at the same time as their professional life. This aspect shows how much their profession is correlated to their daily personal and familial life. Authenticity emerges in the intimacy and the sincerity of the experience. Tiberghien, Bremner and Milne stated: *"The ideal authentic tourism experience could be encountered as if the family was living the same way independently from me, as if I was not there. What they organise for visitors should remain a piece of their lives, not something they are not doing anymore."* (2014:9) Therefore, it seems that performing as a family appears to be the key concept of their authentic touristic experience.

To a more general extent, Edensor argued that "performance vary enormously and depend upon the regulation of the stage and the players" and "the relationship between the players." (2000; 324) As we just argued, this insight gives us information on and valid the role of social interactions within touristic activities. If this is valid, it shows that there is a level of reciprocity through performance. The experience of places can depend on several elements, such as reciprocity, intimacy or even sincerity, even though the experience being principally socially

constructed. (Cohen 1984: 1988) Accordingly, Tiberghien, Bremner and Milne stated: *"The challenge within the 'tourist-Other' relationship is often a lack of intimacy required to fully appreciate the complexity of cultural heritage (Xie, 2011)."* (2014:4) Accordingly, Conran highlighted the importance of intimacy as a way to share tourism experiences, as "intimacy is an embodied experience that arouses a sense of closeness and a story about a shared experience." (2011: 1455)

Thus, in regard to authenticity, another anthropological concept that is relevant to mention is the one of reciprocity. Largely, reciprocity can be defined as being the expectation that people will respond to each other in similar ways. It a form to exchange and involves usually two actors plus what is exchanged – this being a service or a good for instance. For example, in Mauss' (1925) anthropological assessments, "a gift is never free" which means it engages the integrity of both the giver and the receiver. In many cultures, it is accepted that reciprocity has a major role in recognising all human beings together. For example, as Tiberghien outlined: *"In Polynesia, one's spiritual source of authority and wealth (mana) can be lost if the person omits to reciprocate. Sherpa reciprocal labor in the form of kinship in mountain tourism has been reconstituted alongside traditional relations of production and cultural order (Adams 1992)."* (2014; 1)

In the context of a tourism of the authentic, especially eco-tourism, what is exchanged is authenticity itself. According to Benson, the tourist's search for authenticity is also tied up with their desire to find themselves. (Crang 1996, Lindholm 2008) In that, it means that reciprocity includes cooperation at the inter-personal level (the host-guest dynamic). Tiberghien, Bremner and Milne argued that: *"Wearing, Lyons and Snead (2010) argue that reciprocal relationships between host communities and volunteer tourists develop out of productive exchanges that enhance local communities' understanding of tourists' expectations. The potential of the host–guest relationship not only allows the opportunity for mutual knowledge between both parties but can also enhance understanding and acceptance through interaction, (Tucker, 2003). The performative home-stay tourism encounter allows the opportunity for both visitors and home-stay providers to refine their understandings of their respective cultural differences and traditions.* (2017; 5). Here, the idea is that the tourist also acts as a performer at specific scenes when visiting touristic places. One can argue that visitors can authenticate spaces, activities and places through their emotional connection to it, when incorporating emotions and actions in the touristic activity. Authenticity is therefore an idea that is shared, transposed and/or experienced – especially in touristic contexts. By deduction, one can argue that the host-guest relationship

is a complex and context dependent relationship. From that, it means that the nature of the relationship, but likewise the products given, are where the 'authenticity' is looked for. When a tourist comes to a special place to see special things, one expects to find authenticity everywhere and in everything the tourist encounters. Aronsson even talked about 'authentic meeting places' as places where visitors and local populations meet in encounters – this being a part of the everyday life of the local populations. (1994: 86) Therefore, it is clear that the idea of performance in the relationship host-guest implies an infinite scenario of authenticity.

As hosts share authenticity with whatever tourists are looking for and tourists themselves, guests share authenticity through culture, knowledge, background, discussions… etc.) That, way, authenticity entails authenticity. Therefore, the quest for authenticity does not stop here as it seems that on the other side of the spectrum, the guests they welcome are authenticity seekers. Yet they can be likewise authenticity givers as both intimacy and sincerity (in the performance) are shared.

Methodology

For any ethnographic research, it is important to consider the different methods available. Broadly, ethnographic methods can be qualitative, inductive, exploratory and longitudinal. Comprehensively, they achieve a dense description over a relatively small area. It is usually more efficient when researchers conduct their data gathering on an iterative basis, which means they take a 'reflexive' role – in other words, they observe, reflect, build up a theory and then, go back into the field and test it. This process of testing is essential, because of the inevitable element of subjectivity in a research method. In this section, we will cover these methodological aspects. Firstly, I will give an overview of how I found the place and how the first contacts with my participants were. Secondly, I will talk about the use of the camera during fieldwork and the different challenges that I faced when using it daily during fieldwork. Thirdly, I will lay out the different methods of gathering data in my ethnographic research, involving two, namely participant observation and ethnographic interviews. Finally, I will reflect upon my role in this research and in the field.

i.   Finding the place and first contacts

Due to the pandemic COVID-19, it was very difficult to lead the project the way I initially imagined and planned. Initially, I was curious on how we, humans, could live more harmonised and in collaboration with Nature. Later, I discovered different organisations of people who wanted to create *ideal* and *idyll* villages most commonly called eco-villages. Within these communities were living people from all over the world, with each different lifestyles, different morals and visions of life. What I observed however was their desire to be connected with and with lesser impact on nature. For most of them, their political stances are *against capitalism and consumption* – some of them advocating for a world without money and adopting a 'minimalist lifestyle.' Early on my research, I targeted people with alternative lifestyles and people living off-grid. My primary goal was to know more about those who want to live differently and what pushed them to change life completely. Thus, from big and noisy cities surrounded by concrete and buildings, they end up living in small hamlet surrounded by mountains, forests and little housing. My research is therefore focused on this particular shift, this particular desire to change drastically their lives – comprising habits, customs, surroundings and quality of life.

Yet, the pandemic hit all of us worldwide and my capacity to travel was limited to the area where I was currently staying. I had to consider any organisation, people, or community that was near the place I lived in the South East of France. My goal was to bring light on people who have an alternative lifestyle and live – in the reach of their capacity – in accordance with their environment and nature. Thus, I started to contact small eco-communities that were residing near the area. Unfortunately, due to COVID restrictions, most of them refused to meet me. Then, I contacted several persons who chose a different lifestyle – such as a woman that bought a land and created her own *paradise* with a wooden house, a van, some crops and animals – but I believe for the same reasons than above, they did not contact me back.

At one point, I thought that it was only a matter of luck. For Mother's Day, I offered to my mum a night in a very particular and authentic place – in accordance with everything she believes and can get inspired from. As it seems evident, the place was Destination Ailleurs.
If I mention this detail, it is firstly because I found the place of my fieldwork by experiencing it firsthand. It was only after the night spent there, primarily as guests, that I considered asking the managers of Destination Ailleurs to be my protagonists. After explaining my research thesis, giving them some material and bonding with them, they accepted to open their home to me. As I mentioned previously, I am not an outsider of the area as I was born and raised in the region. However, I did not know their place. What was even more appealing to me was the fact *they are outsiders* as they lived most of their life in Paris.

Thus, I arrived first as a guest and only then, I came back as a researcher. It did not fundamentally change their behaviours, yet I felt that they saw me differently. Some days later, I came back with my camera and other cinematic tools and started to plan my stay with them depending on their availability, as I was coming just during the peak of the season and after the quarantine that lasted approximately 2 months. It was an interesting aspect of my research as people could go out and work again. In the local area, tourism was about to re-start and my informants expected twice more reservations. This is why my stay was short.
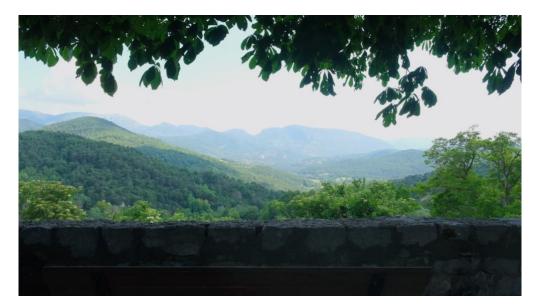
The Yurts

My research fieldwork was led on 7 days. Each day had a specific objective that I needed to attain for the final film and my written thesis.

First Day

The first day was the day during which I was planning the whole week with Yann. I came with my camera and I tried to acclimate my informants to it. I showed it to them because they were not used to be filmed or to be in the spotlight. I had to make them feel comfortable around it. As for me, I had to get used to the different noises, such as the goat's bell ringing from far, the mountain wind, and the shaking camera. All the factors together were making the filming task a bit more complicated than I expected. As I was driving to the place, I filmed the surroundings, some parking signs, city signs, trees, different paths that were leading to the place and some shot of my car moving forward. I was also able to have a sight of the landscape while I was going up, but also the surrounding mountains and some waterfalls. I fully embraced the observant role as I was discovering the surroundings of the place. Then, I sat down with Yann at their table, and we started to establish the goal to reach for each day – depending on social situations that I needed to record for my film and the activities that I needed Yann to show me. One could argue that in an ethnographic research, nothing should be planned as the researcher holds an observant role. Nonetheless, since I had very little time to lead this research as I was coming during the peak season and my informants did not want to feel pressured by my presence, my only plan was to have a plan.

The surroundings and mountains sights when arriving to the destination on my first day of fieldwork.

Second Day

On the second day, I came at their house very early to get some shots of their early mornings and their routine. I also filmed a lot of cutaways and establishing shots as I was driving to the place. In regard to the technical aspect, I tested the sound, tried to film Yann while he was making breakfast and cleaning tables. I just stayed with and around them to get them used to the camera. The second day was surely the day during which I filmed the most: establishing shots, cutaways shots and opening shots of the place with the tripod. For me it was a way to know the place. As I was filming, I was able to notice little details that I did not see when I came the first time. The girls were with me, guiding me around and explaining me a lot of things in the garden. After that, I was able to film the couple and the organisation of their activity from 8am until 2pm. I was able to follow Yann and his younger daughter Camille, doing the cleaning in the yurts in the morning, and then I was able to observe Corinne and her other daughter, Emma, during their cooking marathon. In the morning, Yann explained to me how the water system was established, how they built the sanitary, what exactly was their daily routine with their daughters, the visitors and their family time. A lot of information was gathered that day. Around 4pm, I came back and was able to film a music group who luckily came for a night – playing accordions, guitars, flutes etc. Corinne had a lot of cooking to make as she was welcomed more than 15 persons. Even though I did not know the family too well at this stage, in terms of data gathered, the second day was the richest and the fullest day.

Yann advising guests on hikes to do on my second day of fieldwork.

Corinne and Yann serving drinks to the music group on my second day of fieldwork.

The Music Group Meyli-Meylo performing on my second day of fieldwork.

Third Day

The third day was a day to connect with the two girls, Emma and Camille. As I filmed a lot of things the day before, I dedicated this whole day to do things with them; I thought of visiting my horses with them as they love animals and both practiced horse-riding. I drove them to the place where my two horses are taken care of and we spent the whole day walking in the forest with the horses. I recorded the conversations that we had so then, I could relisten and keep some extracts as genuine sources of information. But apart from that, we just spent quality time together in order to know each other better and earn their trust. At the end of this day, Yann welcomed their guests and explained to them how they built the yurts on their land and their manufacture.

Yann explaining to his guests how a Yurt is built on my third day of fieldwork.
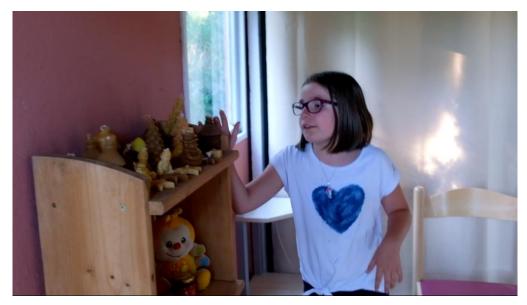
Fourth Day

On the fourth day, because the bonds with my informants and the place were becoming stronger over time, I wanted to be sure that I did not miss certain visual details of the place. I shot some visual details of the yurts, of the garden and their house. On this day, one baby goat got sick, and I was lucky enough to follow and observe them interacting with each other and their animals in order to find a solution and heal the goat. Emma was really worried, so I took care of her while her parents were calling a vet. After this false alert and once the goat felt better, Camille wanted to show me their 'atelier' where they create a lot of things manually, such as drawings, paintings, sculptures made of beeswax, etc. They told me how they rebuilt and painted the walls of their 'atelier' during the quarantine.

Emma comforting the sick baby goat on my fourth day of fieldwork.

Fifth Day

On the fifth day, I wanted to deepen the relationship that I had with their two daughters as their parents were pretty busy doing their routine tasks. I asked them to show me their world, how they play, what they do together or alone, what do they like doing, what interest them the most…etc. By diving into their world, they opened up a lot and felt more and more comfortable in front of the camera. So much that they were asking me to film them every time they were talking. It was like a game for them. They showed me their games, their cabins in the tree and their animals. I also helped Corinne to cook and was lucky to observe her working with her daughters.

Camille showing me the beeswax candles that her dad and them made on my fifth day of fieldwork.

Sixth Day

The sixth day was the day dedicated to the local market occurring in Castellane. I followed Yann getting his fresh groceries, his relationships with some of the local producers. Moreover, at the end of this day, I interviewed them for a bit more than an hour, during dinner. They explained their choice of life and where they come from. They deepen the explanation of their vision and their philosophy. Their testimony is in fact the spine of my thesis, film and material gathered.

Yann getting his fresh goat cheese for his friend, Maria, the goat cheese farmer and her daughter on my sixth day of fieldwork.

Seventh Day

Finally, for the last day, I followed Yann during one of his common visits, guiding their guests through their land. From a pedagogical vision, he wanted to introduce beekeeping to his guests. I followed them for the whole journey. Usually, he takes approximately between one and two hours to explain everything that is going on their land, such as his activity of beekeeping, his future project and the construction of new dwellings, the crops surrounding the place, etc.

Yann explain his activity as a beekeeper in the mountain on my last day of fieldwork.

Yann taking to his guests at the end of the tour on my last day of fieldwork.

To conclude, this week was really intense for them, but also for me. In a short time, we bonded a lot and created beautiful human relationships. It is strange to say but at the end of this week,

I felt like I was a part of their family; the couple trusted me fully, they introduced me to their friends and neighbours, and I felt that their daughters really liked me. It was an interesting and enriching human experience. Concerning the data gathered, in terms of cinematic tools, I was also surprised of the number of shots I was able to capture in a short time. In addition to *simple* information such as notes, photos, etc…, cinematic tools were definitely a strong advantage in my research. I will explain why in the next section.

ii.   Cinematic tools – The use of camera during fieldwork

It is commonly said that the filmmaker is the catalyst of a situation. In this context, it is not hyperbolic to state that the anthropologist researcher is the catalyst of a social situation, who captures a genuine context and social reality with the use of visual and sound tools. However, I deem useful and necessary to define certain anthropological terms such as social situations and social realities – as my use of camera during fieldwork essentially captured social situations and social realities. Firstly, a social situation is a situation during which people engage in dialogues and activities with each other in relation to an environment and a social context. Different types of actors interact in different places and locations while engaging in different activities, what Spradley (1980) would define as being three interconnected elements for a social situation to occur. Secondly, closely related to social situations albeit different, social realities represent the diversity of different cultures and lifestyles. It comprises norms, customs, codes, habits, and values, etc.

As an anthropologist, considering that it only exists one form of existence and therefore one reality – the human existence – would be, according to Spradley, being a "naïve realist." (1971: 18) Intuitively, we all know that the reality is far more complex than this. It is like imagining that different versions of the world are made with different lenses with different shapes – some of them are triangular, square, round, or even rectangular, and so on – through which human existences look at in order to live and interact with the environment. It could be compared to a prism. Indeed, social realities are these lenses, they are what embodies our 'identity' and our conception of the world depending on different preferences and beliefs.

In other words, one can embrace a social constructivist point of view – stating that human development is socially situated, and knowledge is constructed through interactions with others. On the other side, one can also argue that "society exists independently of our conceptions of it, in its causal properties, its ability to exert deterministic forces on individuals (...)." (Davies,

1999: 19). Nevertheless, a prospering society is also dependent on people's actions and human activity. After all, it is fair to acknowledge that behind every eye, there is a reality to which each of us relate to. Therefore, we can establish the existence of many social realities, depending on cultures, conditioning, educations, social contexts, experiences, etc. I believe it is here that lays the role of the visual anthropologist. Indeed, they study social realities through a visual tool by positing themselves as observers so as to understand every form of existences and relate to each other in different social contexts. However, the challenge lies in the concepts of truthfulness and reflexivity. Indeed, the difficulty resides in staying faithful to the true social situation and social reality that the visual anthropologist can only *attempt* to capture. The role of cinematic tools in an ethnographic research is thus questioned and can be highly debated.

During this ethnographic fieldwork, my first intent was to keep the 'pristine' aspect of the social reality I was honored to discover. I wanted to show truth and stay truthful to what I was observing. Yet, as Edgar Morin wrote in an introduction to a conference on *cinema verité* at the Pompidou Centre (1980): *"There are two ways to conceive of the cinema of the Real: the first is to pretend that you can present reality to be seen, the second is to pose the problem of reality. In the same way, there were two ways to conceive cinema vérité. The first was to pretend you brought truth. The second was to pose the problem of truth."* Cinema vérité highlights a connection between film and its context, but also combines improvisation to reveal truths. As for my case with my informants, it can involve interactions between the filmmaker and the subjects.

From these established outlines, in my research, the use of the video camera was more of an inconvenience than a facilitator. Therefore, it is only fair to acknowledge the influence that a camera has on social situations within social realities. In front of a camera people behave differently, and the social situation is undeniably affected. Thus, staying loyal to a social situation and a social reality is a task that every visual anthropologist attempts to tackle.

As previously mentioned, with the presence of a camera, spontaneous behaviours are harder to capture. For example, this was the case during the ethnographic interviews. I made the conscious choice to plan the interview on the last day. According to Walford, "interviewing at the start of an ethnographic research period does, however, have disadvantages. Ideally, interviews might better be conducted some way into the project when relationships have been established and those involved are comfortable in their knowledge of the researcher and what he or she is aiming to achieve." (2018: 7) Moreover, I knew that they would be way more

comfortable to talk in front of the camera only after they got used to it, and after they knew me and my approach better. My goal was to have spontaneous expressions and capture their social reality. Only them could tell the story. Hence, I planned a dinner to have a banal conversation with the couple and their daughters, so that they forget the camera filming and recording them. "At one point", I thought, "the camera is set up, they will never know when I will turn the red button on."[24]

However, despite my efforts, I observed that whenever people were facing a camera set on a tripod, they were self-conscious. Except some people that were particularly comfortable with it, I only met people who know too well that every of their action and word is recorded. Hence, they control their appearance, words, actions, decisions and manners. Although body language betrays them sometimes, being truthful to a social reality when subconsciously, our informants '*stage*' and/or control their behaviours is very difficult. Indeed, these types of attitudes can affect the 'truth' that the visual anthropologist tries to represent. According to Erving Goffman (1959), in social situations, people manage and manipulate the impressions they give to the exterior. Additionally, he claimed that people interchange between sincere and manipulative behaviours when interacting with other people. It means that they act in accordance with the anthropologist's analysis of the situation to give people certain impressions. Moreover, Goffman compared people's representation of their identity to a theater, where there is a back and a front stage and where actors perform. Thus, it is true, anthropologists have access to certain knowledge, yet Charlotte Davies (1999) argued that the only truth they can attain is a partial truth. It is simply an acknowledgment of the fact that "everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role... It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves." (Goffman 1959: 20) The costume that people put on is a conception that they have formed throughout their lives. Goffman further stated: *"(...) this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons."* (ibid.: 20)

In regard to my research paper and film, my informants were indeed quite uncomfortable at first, and as I mentioned before, my camera was more an inconvenience than a facilitator. I even

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[24] Notes taken from fieldwork.

remember Corinne asking me to skip the interview part of my research, because she "was intimidated in front of the camera and (she) did not like it"[25] as she expressed.

To recall, ethnographic interviewing is a type of qualitative research that combines immersive observation and directed one-on-one interviews. On the latter, I noticed that during the observation phase, which is filming all day long to get everything that is happening, when they are in social situations and interacting with each other, the camera slowly disappears in the surrounding. The camera and the cameraman – which is me – disappears because they are focused on what they do. At this moment, the visual anthropologist becomes a part of the surrounding and it becomes easy to capture truths in the social situations encountered. However, when it comes to ethnographic interviews, it is way harder. To recall, an ethnographic interview in an informal interview that takes places in a naturalistic setting and is often the result of participant observation. It seems quite paradoxical and is definitely frustrating because it is during interviews (recorded or not recorded) that we – as far as I am concerned – as visual anthropologists, create an intimate bond with our informants as we approach different subjects, more or less intimate. It is during ethnographic interviews that we reach the depth of the subject approached because we directly address it to find answers and to give a voice to our informants so that they can give us *their* story. For example, as Walford stated: *"Interviews can give information on activities that occurred outside of the period of study, or during the period of study but when the research did not obtain access."* (2018: 7) We will discuss this statement in the next section.

iii.   Participant observations and ethnographic interviews

Although they can be debated, ethnographic interviews are commonly used in ethnographic research. As mentioned before, they are a way to unravel certain aspects of a research as it enables informants to voice *their* story. However, it is indeed contended that they pose difficulties in interpretation. While ethnographers are interested in understanding how people construct and interpret cultures in their natural settings, it seems that interviews are based on rules that counteract most normal interactions. As Walford argued, "we live in a world where interviews are pervasive." Yet, he detailed that*: "Interviews in ethnography are like any of these popular conceptions of the nature of interviews. First, they are research interviews. The aim of these interviews is not to trick the person being interviewed into saying something*

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[25] Notes taken during fieldwork.

he or she may later regret, but to establish some kind of "truth" about his or her experiences, behaviours, interpretations, or views." (2018; 1) At the end of the day, "the fundamental question to be answered is "How do they do things around here?" (Deal, 1985)" as he further stated. (Walford, 2018: 3)

Nonetheless, the problem is the same than with the use of camera and its impact on the informants. Reaching and/or catching the truth of a social reality and/or a social situation is very difficult, albeit impossible. It is evident that interviewers and interviewees co-construct the interview and make decisions that will impact the directions of it: like any research, an ethnographic interview has a plan. It also has subject to cover, to expand, to explain. According to Walford, "interviewers and interviewees take part in a performative and rhetorical interchange and will select their words with care and will moderate what they to say to the particular circumstances." (2018; 4)

We already established that visual anthropologists will always remain subjective, no matter how honest they are. They will always have subjective perceptions that can be related to past experiences and/or current conditions. All these perceptions can change over time and depend on circumstances, making impossible to reach *any absolute reality* available. In regard to ethnographic interviews, some critics went even further and argued that researchers needed to move beyond the traditional cooperative paradigm and recognise the underlying conflictual nature of society: *"In its most extreme form (…) the cooperative paradigm of society assumed it is possible to ask members what is going on and they will tell. Yet everyone knows when he (sic) thinks about it that only the naïve, the innocent, the dupe takes his position all the time in everyday life. Rather, all competent adults are assumed to know that there are at least four major problems lying in the way of getting at social reality by asking people what is going and that these problems must be dealt with if one is to avoid being taken in, duped, deceived, sued, put on, fooled, suckered, make a patsy, left holding the bag, fronted and so on."* (Douglas, 1976; 57) With this statement, Douglas argued that researcher should assume that people and groups are in conflict with one another, and that their aims and objectives often clash.

This aspect raises ethical questions. Indeed, in regard to my research and informants, I always kept in mind that what my informants primarily do is running a touristic activity. Although I never doubted their honesty, truthfulness and dedication to my research project, I was sometimes worried that my informants would only show me their positive sides so that, I, through my research and the audience – albeit very little – that I would have, would portray

them in a way that it would be a springboard for advertising their activity. Similarly, I was really concerned that I would direct them too much throughout the interview, as I was targeting certain subject that I wanted to cover. In the end, my worries were only worries. The methodology behind my research helped me to avoid most of these traps. Hence why, in any ethnographic research, a long-term participant observation is of high necessity: it enables us, researcher, to be closer to the truth.

Participant observation is one of the main ethnographic data collection methods. In fact, it is the cornerstone of ethnographic methods. It was not developed until anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's (1888-1942) landmark research amongst the Trobriand Islanders in the South Pacific. Partially as a result of this inadvertent long-term fieldwork, Malinowski came to believe that the most effective approach to researching cultures was that of participant observation. Although it was revolutionary in its day, today this method remains one of the most effective to dive into one's participants world. Indeed, one of the key ideas underlying Malinowski's vision of participant observation was that researchers armed with 'real scientific aims' reside with the people being studied for an extended period of time (usually at least a year to enable observation of the annual cycle of events). As Malinowski wrote: *"Living in the village with no other business but to follow native life, one sees the customs, ceremonies and transactions over and over again, one has examples of their beliefs as they are actually lived through, and the full body and blood of actual native life fills out soon the skeleton of abstract constructions."* (1922; 18)

He also emphasised that long-term participant observation enabled anthropologists to come to recognise the differences between societal rules for behavior and actual behavior – so as to make the difference between *ideal* culture and *real* culture. Thus, the pioneer of this ethnographic method believed that it was only through participating in and observing everyday life over a long period of time that anthropologists could hope to begin to see and experience the world through the eyes of those whose one seeks to understand.

In brief, the essence of participant observation is that the researcher observes the subject of their research either by participating directly in the action, as a member of the study population, or as a 'pure' observer, in which case they do not participate in the action but are still present on the scene. In either case, the researcher observes, notes, records, describes, analyses, and interprets people in their interactions and related events, with the objective of obtaining a systematic account of behaviours and idea systems of a given community. Moreover,

participant observation is usually inductive and carried out as part of an exploratory research phase, with the view of forming hypotheses from the data. It is often connected with the grounded theory method, according to which researchers revisit the research territory by deepening knowledge.

During my fieldwork, participant observation enabled me to create strong bonds with my informants and capture subtleties of social situations and social realities: in these conditions and with this method, it was impossible for me to miss something. I was constantly there, with Yann on his land with the guests, with Corinne in the kitchen and with Emma and Camille in the goats' shelter or in the playground. It was like I was a part of the landscape; they knew that I was there because sometimes they were interacting with me, but they also forgot my presence and the camera which was filming. In fact, my presence did not cause any trouble or discomfort, on the contrary, it facilitated relationships and trust. My constant and participative presence helped me as much as it was possible, to capture their social reality without appropriating or damaging the truth. As Geertz put it: *"If there is any way to counter the conception of ethnography as an iniquitous act or an unplayable game, it would seem to involve owning up to the fact that, like quantum mechanics or the Italian opera, it is a work of the imagination, less extravagant than the first, less methodical than the second."* (1988; 140)

To sum up, all these flaws encountered during fieldwork, whether they are caused by the presence of a camera which impacts the behaviour of informants or by the researcher's innate subjectivity, can be reduced, albeit avoided, entirely to reflexivity.

iv.   Reflexivity

Reflexivity is one of the most important concepts of ethnographic research, in fact it is the guiding concept of any anthropological research. It is defined as being "a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference." (Davies, 2008: 4) As I mentioned above, reflexivity enables the anthropologist to reflect on themselves when they are in social realities and the social situation(s) of the informant(s). It helps understanding the subjectivity that the anthropologist has when facing a social situation. It is true, as a basic concept of philosophy, that we all know that what we perceive is entirely subjective, especially in a new environment. My position in my ethnographic research was even more subjective for several reasons. I will explain why.

In ethnographic films, as David MacDougall put it, the observer is not "a machine, much less of a god, but an eye and mind behind the camera." (2001-2002; 88) Hence, "no ethnographic film is merely a record of another society, it is always a record of the meeting between a filmmaker and that society" (1998; 134), as he further argued. Thus, reflexivity is a guiding concept in anthropological research. It enables the anthropologist to reflect on himself in regard to the social reality(ies) and the social situation(s) of the informant(s). It helps understanding the subjectivity that the anthropologist has when facing a social situation. Mostly, what the visual anthropologist seeks is the representation of the truth. In order to reach it and tackle a potential influential subjectivity, reflexivity is of a high importance.

When I decided to direct my research in the South of France, I felt confident. This was entirely because the location of my research is in my childhood region. As I explained in another section above, I knew the village where I was going, I knew how people behave and talk, the customs, the traditions, their hobbies, and the tourism in this location. I knew the language too. I was familiarized with almost all of the aspects that I was preparing to encounter. This was firstly a facilitator, because I did know what to expect and I felt confident interacting with it. I did not know Yann and Corinne, nor their daughters, the guests nor even their land, but I was used to the region. When I was little, I used to go a lot in this touristic place; the turquoise lake and its attractions, and more broadly, the Gorge du Verdons itself, are a pretty known place for any local French east southerners.

However, after a time, I perceived it as a hindrance because I had conceived and pre-made ideas about everything and was expecting too much of certain aspects of data. What I did not know was the social reality of a Parisian family running a touristic place in my childhood region, their hopes, their goals, their opinions and feelings about such a change of life, or even their approach as *local* outsiders.

Nonetheless, a form of subjectivity is not a problem for Davies. As she stated: *"(...) Ethnographers must seek to develop forms of research that fully acknowledge and utilize subjective experience and reflection on intrinsic part of research."* (Davis, 2008; 4-5) According to her and in situations where the ethnographer encounters another way of life and culture such an altering of self under the pressure of cultural expectation while participating in the community allows the ethnographer to access others no matter how different their cultural background is. In other word and adaptively to my social context, researcher's own subjectivity does not need to have a negative effect on their methodology. On these terms, reflexive visual

ethnography can generate a form of material that is not accessible through native texts, nor is the product of the individual anthropologist's psyche and conditioning. Rather, it gives access to a collection of knowledge which in essence reflects the informant's social reality.

Thus, what Davies recommends is to work with our own subjectivity through reflexivity, rather than trying the impossible enterprise to eliminate it. This is what I attempted to reproduce, I tried to get all the advantages of my position. I was able to discuss about their place in greater details and my inquiries had the benefits to be more precise, especially during the ethnographic interview, enabling me to feel more connected to my protagonists.

Empirical Chapters

i.   Rural Idyll and Rural Ideals

In this section, we will try to understand Yann and Corinnes' motivations – in other words, what pushed them to leave Paris for a rural idyll with ideals conditions – and we will attempt to comprehend it through anthropological literature related to it.

As we attempted to know in the theoretical approach section, it seems that Yann and Corinne Lespiat were fundamentally influenced by their desire to connect to natural places. From what I gathered during fieldwork, they confessed 'having a thirst'[26] for natural spaces and calm. They also told me that the urban way of life was not suited for them anymore. They asserted to me in the many conversations that I had with them that: *"In our former life, we were both very close to have a burnout. When we were aware that something was not right in our life, we took inspiration on those who fundamentally changed their lives, those who created small communities with a simple life in a natural setting, far away from the capital."* They then continued: *"That is why, or at least, thanks to whom that we changed our lifestyle. Eco-villages movements inspired us. Then we looked for a land to buy in a faraway village – more precisely in the South of France because we always wanted to live there – and we found Destination Ailleurs. We thought of a project first, because we're not delusional or fools, we all know we need money to sustain our life. Sustainability is the most important; sustainability for us, individuals living in a society, and for the environment we live in. So, when we found this land sold with Mongolian yurts, we went for it."* [27]

From this statement, my perception of their motivations changed. It is clear that the two reasons mentioned in the theoretical approach – namely, the first motive stemming from environmental movements and the second being a strong will to have a better quality of life – appear to be responsible for their desire to change their lifestyle. However, what looks different, one could argue, is that their approach is quite uncommon: they are not part of an intentional community nor they have the desire to join an eco-village. But they are neither people who decided to live simply – they are not minimalistic – or some people who pursue the rural idyll as Ralph Veraart argued in his master thesis. In his thesis, his participants Timothy and Karen did not have a

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[26] Notes taken during fieldwork.
[27] Notes taken during fieldwork.

company, or a business that helps them financially. Concerning them, they are more or less self-sufficient in regard to food production and have a proper farming experience as they work with cows, horses, pigs, etc.[28] Ralph Veraart stressed that: *"Michael Bunce addresses the 'commercialization of the countryside', the 'nostalgia business', 'the commodification of the rural idyll' and he explains that the significance of the image of the rural idyll may vary from person to person. He believes that perhaps most people have no sense of and no interest in a rural idyll. For other people it represents an image of the countryside with which they readily identify when prompted, but which does not play a significant part in their lives. For yet another group it may influence what they read and watch and the ways in which they decorate their houses. And for some it will translate into action in the search for actual experience of a rural idyll in countryside recreation or country living (2003, 26). Timothy and Karen belong to the latter group."* (2013: 17-18)

Well, it seems that although one could argue that my participants also belong to the latter, they do not. In fact, one can state that they belong to none of the categorization that Michael Bunce did because they are not farmers like Timothy and Karen wanted to become. Yann and Corinne work with farmers in close collaboration, they live just as they do, but their activity lays on tourism, Authentic Tourism. One can think that it is in fact a social reality that could truly benefit of an in-depth analysis and here is why. As we were arguing previously, what is different in my participants' situation to other alternative lifestyles is the fact that they consciously tackle what one could call, the 'utopia ditch' in which most of the people driven by these motivations fall. Certainly because of their profession background, they allied to their project not only an idyll vision, but also an ideal one.

On one hand, idyll refers to bliss, heaven and romanticism. This term means that it is picturesque and charming, and it evokes paradise. On the other hand, ideal means that all the settings required are gathered for it – the activity – to be perfect and working efficiently. The point is that most of the people questing these alternative lifestyles in rural areas forget to think about the settings required for their dream to become *real*. Usually, they follow a desire and a fantasy of rurality and peacefulness – hence why most of them look for eco-villages or join intentional communities with the same values. The concept of the rural idyll is formulated by Michael Woods as "(being) a place of peace, tranquility and simple virtue, contrasted by the

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[28] MVA Master thesis: Living where the grass is greener: reflections on an alternative life in a mountain village in Romania by Ralph Veraart (2013).

bustle and brashness of the city" (2010; 21-22). In his book, he justified rural migrations with the key role that Hollywood has played in reproducing ideas of the rural idyll in the modern era, contributing to its global diffusion through art, poetry, literature, music and tv productions. By picturing rurality as attractive, peaceful, almost heavenly, but also "as a source of food and energy; as a pristine wilderness or as a bucolic idyll; as a playground, or a place of escape; as a fragile space of nature in need of protection; and as a primitive place in need of modernization." (2010:1) Woods recognised that it can be a pull-factor in counter-urbanisation. (Woods, 2010) But this is not the only factor responsible for such representation of rurality. Michael Bunce even underlined the influence that children's literature may have on growing individuals. When trying to justify the formation of an image of the rural idyll in people's minds, he claimed that the images absorbed are likely to be a: *"variety of anthropomorphized wild and farm animals, of an environmental benign farming overseen by jolly farmers and their wives, and of happy children enjoying free-roaming adventures in fields and woods in which the countryside often transforms into an imaginary place (the latest vision of this being the Harry Potter novels). [...] To a large extent, much of the imagery is absorbed in childhood. Given the formative significance of the early years, exposure of even small amounts of children's literature must result in the subconscious absorption of stereotypically idyllic perceptions of rurality."* (2003: 22-23)

It is therefore possible that Yann and Corinne had this constructed idea about rurality and life in the countryside coming from tales and children's stories. It is also very likely that their two daughters were convinced by this idea and imagined a huge land where they could play in the trees. When Yann and Corinne decided to move away and leave Paris, Emma and Camille were supporting the project. In the interview that I conducted with them, their parents swore that they would have never moved to Eoulx if their daughters were not supported this project. As it is understandable because of their ages, it is very likely that they imagined a rural idyll with animals, prairies and peacefulness. Once, while we were playing in the playground, Emma confessed to me: *"I am really happy that we've moved here. I prefer here than Paris, because here, it looks like how I imagined it."* Camille added in the discussion: *"Yes it is true! We are freer, and we feel happy every day. I asked my dad to have a horse because it is my dream to have one in my backyard eating grass when I open the curtains of my room, and we will have one very soon!"*[29]

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[29] Notes taking during fieldwork.

Hence, Yann and Corinne's idyll vision of rurality and the countryside stems from these pre-conceived ideas and images of idyllic rural settings. Nevertheless, it seems that not only media or children books influence the image that people make of rurality, as it also comes from their experiences. It is important to note that Yann and Corinne were living in a Parisian suburb, a 45 min far from the city center. They were already living in the countryside – in the Parisian countryside, which is far less *natural* than some other French countryside as it is close to the Parisian metropole. This shows that they were well-informed on the challenges that they could face when starting this project. They thought about the ideal conditions before moving away. This is why, as one could argue, the 'ideal rural' was also taken into consideration as the settings required for their dream to become reality were evidently considered before doing this project. Thus, it seems that they did not follow a utopian project. In this context, the ideal refers to a system that enables Yann and Corinne to live alternatively and in rural areas while earning enough money to sustain this alternative lifestyle.

ii.   The Tourism of the Authentic

In any human dynamics, reciprocity is fundamental. It seems that my protagonists were willing to share and to learn from other people and from places. According to Michael Harkin, "Tourism is the primary mode of reciprocity between countries, ethnic groups, regions and classes (Schwimmer 1979: 232). This relationship between (euphemistically labeled "hosts and guests" is an increasingly important one in economic, political and cultural terms. (Smith 1989b)." (1995: 650) For him, the tourist has the same role as the sociocultural anthropologist, as they share a common filiation: the explorer, the crusader, the missionary and the trader. (Harkin, 1995). It is actually very relevant, as it is important to note that I discovered Yann and Corinne's activity first as a tourist making a surprise for Mother's Day and I came back as an anthropological researcher. My experience was the same, although when I came back, I had the possibility to dig even deeper in the subject and create special bonds with my informants. Harkin even stated: *"Tourism and anthropology interpenetrate in substantive, pragmatic ways. Anthropologists inevitably begin their fieldwork as (or as if) tourists."* (1995; 651). Yet, the focus is on my informants and their touristic activity Destination Ailleurs.

As we outlined in the previous section, when moving to the South, Yann and Corinne had *an idea* of rurality. But they did not want to lose themselves in a utopian project in which nothing is truly feasible or compatible with the current economic, social and political system. They tried

to stay anchored to their social and economic reality. Therefore, they needed a system that would benefit them and the society with the pre-conceived ideas that they had on rurality and alternative lifestyles. Thus, there were looking for an idyllic project with ideal conditions in the mountains. In the interview that I conducted and the many conversations that I had with them during my fieldwork, more than once, they told me that they were looking for a land with a possibility to install a touristic business. They explained to me that they found this land to sell on internet, with the yurts with it, as the precedent landlord had already a passion for yurts and primitive dwellings. Thus, it was important to them to associate their love to their project with the exterior. Yann told me something that resonated a lot, he said:

"This project is a life's project. I needed to accomplish this because what I want since the dawn of my existence is to share. To share with others and learn from others. That is why three years ago, when we started Destination Ailleurs and we needed hands to build and arrange facilities on our land, we posted an ad on the web with the title 'Workshop: participatory work, exchange of skills.' This is how we got the bathrooms built, how I learnt how to make a water resurgence and leanrt many other skills that I use every day. On the contrary, people helping us had the possibility to eat, live and visit the surroundings for free. I bet it is a good bargain!"[30]

From his testimony, it is therefore easy to see their *true* intentions. Today, even though their activity is expanding, they still use this dynamic of trading skills and knowledge in exchange of shelters, food and wonders. One can argue that this is where they started their activity, until the time they had to feed their daughters and live their life normally. From their urban surroundings, they were looking to experience authenticity and make it an activity out of it. Harkin argued that "this question for authenticity is essential, if not to all tourism, at least to its more prestigious forms." He further continued: "Indeed, an anxiety about authenticity pervades the tourism experience, and reflects the perceived inauthenticity of modern life. The quest for authenticity is most explicit in the case of parabourgeoise travelers such as hippies and 'dharma bums,' but is shared by the common tourist (Cohen 1973)." (1995: 653) It seems that my protagonists' activity is well-associated to new environmental movements and alternative lifestyles representers, but what is more alternative and environmentally friendly than hippies? Thus, the latter statement shows that touristic activity works with authenticity. If the hosts propose authentic experiences, the guests will therefore reciprocate; with their excitement, their personal background and experiences, with skills and helpful advises, etc. Reciprocity, as we

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[30] Notes taken during fieldwork.

established earlier, is a fundamental element of any human dynamic and one of the core concepts of tourism. It is an exchange of culture, of knowledge, of experiences and of cultural heritage. (Harkin, 1995) But how the tourism of the authentic takes place? How Yann and Corinne created a place where tourists – or guests – feel at home without taking away the authentic part of the experience?

As Harkin claimed: *"Tourism has become a nearly universal phenomenon among the middle classes. In most countries, including those outside the "West," space has become divided between marked "attractions" and the un- marked landscape; weekly, monthly, and annual time between periods of work and leisure."* (1995: 650) This means that the social class targeted is one of theirs, namely middle-class people. One can argue that my informants became the product that they sell. By wanting to inspire, share and grow with others, they made these concepts central to their activity. From people who host others for touristic activities, they became people whose life is *alike* a touristic activity. Their activity suddenly became their family *being* and *living* on their land with their animals. In fact, they are like a family organized economy promoting self-sufficient peasantry living in harmony with nature and surroundings. These aspects are what made their activity as authentic. By positing themselves in a subtle way – due to their background and past experiences as bankers and people from the city – they positioned themselves as being the contrary of an urban experience. This aspect is also directed to people who just like them are thinking to change their life and adopt an alternative lifestyle. More generally, the law of attraction is universal and well-known: positive attracts positive and negative attracts negative. It is therefore logical to observe that people like Yann and Corinne attracts people like them – with a worldview that is similar so that they can inspire each other.

Nonetheless, what is interesting in this dynamic is their capacity to perform a family. This means that they are no longer a family working for an activity, they *are* the activity. Additionally, this is why Yann and Corinne are uncompromising when it comes to the participation of their daughters on site, in the activity. They want their daughters to be completely involved in the project because firstly, they believe that it is really healthy for them to grow in this kind of environment with animals and nature, and fair enough; secondly, because it is also a part of the authenticity of their activity, as a family. Without their daughters, their activity would be less authentic, less special. Very subtly, by being a tight-knit family, working together and living together in a natural setting, they mirror to other people the traditional way of life – like people used to be in the past. This is what makes them authentic, as individuals

who can offer hospitality to the curious traveler, and as an activity which proposes an immersed experience in their reality.

This aspect makes me think of a form of 'new peasantry', selling their way of life – an alternative rural lifestyle – as an inspiration in contradiction to a loud urban setting. To be more precise, when using the word "peasantry" what I mean is the "peasant condition." (Edelman, 2009) As Edelman argued, "Van der Ploeg contended that it consists of various interrelated elements that permit survival in a hostile environment; these include a "self-controlled resource base," "coproduction" or interaction between humans and nature, cooperative relations that allow peasants to distance themselves from monetary relations and market exchange, and an ongoing "struggle for autonomy" or "room for maneuver" that reduces dependency and aligns farming "with the interests and prospects of the…producers." (32)" (2009:1)

It is clear that the autonomy that Yann and Corinne have within their activity are a key element in understanding their social roles in the society. Although, they are not farmers – albeit a little – they are almost entirely self-sufficient for themselves. When it comes to guests that they host, they must go to the local market or the nearest village to get what they need to provide the services they sell in the Destination Ailleurs experience. Yet, they can still be considered as 'a modern peasantry,' also considered as a new and emergent social status – destined to inspire middle class people.

In a world in which modern individualism emerges, it is difficult to analyse the world and the social interactions by their position in social hierarchy. Nowadays, social positions are harder to grasp and are now understood as 'social roles' to be filled by individuals whose individuality – or 'essence' – precedes and transcends those roles. Thus, Trilling (1972) argued that "the importance of sincerity in the early modern period derived from concerns about whether a person's social actions matched or masked inner attitudes." (Handler 2001: 965) When approaching both context at the same time, sincerity and authenticity seems to be completely inter-dependent. Another aspect of their activity that, one can argue, deserves attention, is their family status and roles within the activity and the sincerity they have when having these roles. The sincerity feeds authenticity in authentic ways. Sincerity is mainly expressed through the performance of a social role. The more the guest feels the sincerity in their approach, the more authentic the experience is. It is therefore clear that performance and sincerity are at the core of any authentic experience.

Concerning social roles, as in any family, every one of the members has a role – whether it is a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, an uncle, a grandparent… etc. For example, in more traditional and religious influenced models, the father is the protector of the family and goes outside to feed his family. In our modern world, this behaviour would be translated as going to work to earn money to feed his family and providing everything that is necessary for their survival. Hence, in the context of Yann and Corinne's activity, everyone has roles which benefit their activity. As their definition of the tourism of the authentic is a performing family or a family profession, each of their roles are of high importance. For example, because their activity is based on a traditional model, it seems that gender roles are also traditional. Yann is responsible of the outdoors activities, while Corinne takes care of the cooking and the services. This dynamic helps the activity to function and to please their guests. Every one of them does an activity that reflect or match inner attitudes as Trilling (1972) argued. It means that they do what their essence or individuality tells them to do. Although their roles (with their structure and agency) have already been detailed in the previous sections, it is important to highlight the dynamics within Yann and Corinne's couple, but also within the whole family, including their daughters. Thus, it seems that Corinne is good at cooking and preparing meals while Yann is better at building, constructing, advising and creating bonds with people within outdoor activities, i.e. he made a trapper camp site on his land, where guests can camp and cook when they hike in the mountains. Moreover, their daughters have the innocence of any children, but they are good at gathering guests' children to show them their goats and other animals or to take them to the playground to play. As we wrote previously, Emma and Camille have an 'emotion role' or 'entertaining role' in the dynamic as they bring tenderness and amusement to adults, and inspiration and familiarity to guests' children.

Although their roles can be debated as one can argue that it is way too traditional and potentially '*sexist*' – as Corinne is *diminished* to someone that serves in the kitchen, cooks for everyone and takes care of the administrative papers. To a certain extent, Corinne's role could be portrayed by ancient roles attributed to women. Feminists could argue that an individual should not be limited by a social and gender role, but it seems that in this dynamic, the whole family is a social role performing authenticity. If the feminist is right, then all of the actors are limited by their roles; Yann being limited by his aptitude to work in outdoors activities and largely, represented traditionally by the man who hunts, who builds shelters and brings foods to his family. Their daughters appear to contribute despite themselves to their activity, as they play, interact and help their parents, seeing this with the eyes of a child.

Overall, their activity also called eco-tourism allies natural setting, environmental awareness and French culture in an unexpected way. Corinne cooks French cuisine in a remarkable way with traditional dishes. Yann embarks their guests to new outdoors activities, with beautiful hikes in the mountains, very elaborated explanations of the construction of the yurts, his activity as a beekeeper and his production of French mountain honey. Emma and Camille bring to the addition a sense of innocence and inspiration for the next generation as they represent an alternative life in which they grow and become responsible adults. All of it seems to be the perfect association for nature and culture to be reunited. Everything seems to represent perfectly the tourism of the authentic. Yet, this stands on the profound differences between rural and urban environments as everyone who seeks an experience such as Destination Ailleurs comes here with the idea to get away from modernity and urban settings. Can authentic eco-tourism reconcile the nature-culture dichotomy – also felt as the fundamental opposition of rurality and urbanity?

iii.   The Nature-Culture dichotomy – Authentic Eco-Tourism as a common ground?

One can claim that the disconnection between nature and humans led certain people to make a choice between urban and rural environments. Indeed, it is evident that some of the factors involving a change of life and an alternative lifestyle are directly linked to the lack of connection with nature and other natural surroundings. As we discovered, many influences led Yann, Corinne and their two daughters to move from Paris to the South of France, in Eoulx. We established that lifestyle migrations occur due to different growing movements, such as environmental concerns, eco-villages and intentional communities, or even a strong personal and individual desire to be surrounded by nature and live in rural areas. As we examined, the latter is often due to an overdose of cities and urban areas. Hence, we also acknowledged that these decisions stem from wide general accepted ideas of rurality and urbanity. The latter being the central axis of our analysis. We argued that the idea of rurality is correlated to nature whilst the idea of urbanity is associated to culture. As Maria Kaika observed: *"[...] the historical geographical process that started with industrialization and urbanization and aimed at taming and controlling nature through technology, human labor, and capital investment. The same process aspired to rendering modern cities autonomous and independent from nature's whims. This project transformed socio-natural landscapes across the world and disrupted the preexisting ontological categories of 'nature' and "'the city.'"* (2005: 5) In that, by

industrialising and urbanising central poles, the cities (or poles where culture prosper) and the countryside (or poles where wild natural spaces and rural areas are) were categorized by being separated and distinct. This entails a lot of representation in people's minds; especially the idealisation of rurality as being the contrary of urbanity; therefore, opposing the concept of culture to the concept of of nature as they seem to grow independently and far away from each other.

Thus, it is with these concepts in mind that it is useful to outline the parallel between humans' activity and culture, as they both represent a long development and evolution of ideas and dogmas. Overall, humans' activity happens in the city with art, technology, cultural resources in museums, and architecture… etc. Hence, the final query is: how can humans' activities and nature can be reconciled? Can they actually be reconciled? Before trying to explain how Yann and Corinne potentially found a common ground and a solution to the nature-culture dichotomy, I deem relevant to outline fundamental definitions in order to analyse the argument in a clearer way.

First of all, it is important to establish that the nature and culture divide represents the theoretical foundation of contemporary anthropology. It is therefore a long and everlasting debate. Early anthropologists have tried for long to gain some theoretical insights from the perceived tensions between nature and culture. The focus was mainly on whether the two entities function separately from one another or if they have a continuous biotic relationship with each other. Nevertheless, in eastern society nature and culture have always been thought to be divided and dichotomous in their definition – in the sense that they are separate and distinct domains of reference. Yet, in 2017, UNESCO declared on their website: *"Respect for biological diversity implies respect for societal and cultural diversity, as both elements are intimately interconnected and fundamental to global well-being and peace. In today's world, biological and cultural diversity – diversity of genes, species, ecosystems, landscapes and seascapes, and diversity of languages, livelihoods, values, knowledge systems, social and political systems, beliefs, spirituality and worldviews, are facing unprecedented change and, in some cases, erosion."*[31]

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[31] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/special-themes/biodiversity/biodiversity-culture/

Before deepening the discussion, I believe important to define both terms in question: nature and culture. From a general assumption, Nature is defined as being a form of biological diversity, itself defined as being the variation of life at the level of genes, species and ecosystem.[32] In the broadest sense, Nature is the natural, physical or material world. It can therefore refer to the phenomena of the physical world and also to life in general. According to its etymology, the word 'nature' comes from the Latin *natura* and has a direct relation to *nascor*, which means the act of being born, to be raised – it is a procedural view of life. Quite different definitions emerged throughout time and depending on the civilization. *Physis* is the Greek word for nature. It includes in itself human aspects. The ancient Greek saw nature as something dynamic, alive, organic.[33]

On the other hand, our Western conception of nature is quite different. It seems that its definition evolved over time and opened a door for new conceptions. Today, we conceive nature as being something static and without dynamism. We value nature as something purely material and even as a mere object. It is easy to think that nature is granted and infinite. We conceive it as being something we dominate and use to its loss for our own survival. We usually use it until it runs out, without considering its importance. To our eyes, nature is as 'dead' as a table on which we eat our breakfast every morning. Moreover, it is something we do not refer to as being alive and part of ourselves. Humans and nature seem to be two different entities, as, over time, we completely disconnected ourselves to it. Accordingly, in one of his inaugural lectures, Philippe Descola claimed: *"It looks as though the anthropology of nature is an oxymoron of sorts, given that for the past few centuries, nature has been characterized in the West by humans' absence, and humans, by their capacity to overcome what is natural in them."* But, as he outlined, *"Nature does not exist as a sphere of autonomous realities for all peoples, and it must be anthropology's task to understand not only why and how so many peoples classify under the heading of humanity many existents that we call natural, but also why and how it has seemed to us necessary to exclude these entities from our common destiny."* (Descola, 2001: 1)

On the other side, culture is defined as being the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. As it seems a hard enterprise, anthropologists have long debated an appropriate definition of culture. Even today, some anthropologists criticise the culture concept as oversimplifying and stereotyping cultures. But oversimplifying this

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[32] CBD, 1992
[33] Wikipédia : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature

debate is sometimes useful, as both concepts seem dichotomic, yet fundamentaly and innately stemming from each other.

The first anthropological definition of culture comes from 19th century British anthropologist, Edward B. Tylor: *"Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."* (1920 [1871]: 1) Over time, anthropologists have learned that including specifics into the definition of culture limited that definition and would fail to be applied to all cultures. Thus, a general definition of culture that can fit to all existences can be schemed by patterns of behavior that are common within a particular population of people. Therefore, culture can be defined by following a set of conditions. It is firstly a learnt behavior. We are not born with it and it is therefore non-biological. We learn culture over our lifetime depending on our location. Secondly, culture is shared. While we each have our own cultural peculiarities, we share a large part of our culture with others. Thirdly, culture is symbolic. It is the thing that gives meaning to things. Language might be the most important example of the symbolic nature of culture, as it is one of the primary ways with which we communicate with one another. But also, all forms of art, like music, cinema, gastronomy, etc. Fourthly, culture is holistic. Ideally, culture is all encompassing; it is a blueprint for living and tell us how to respond in any given situation. Culture change can however occur. Finally, culture is integrated. It can be compared to a clock, as it is a system. To a certain extent, culture is a system of institutions that work together to meet the needs of a group, a community, or even a society. There are also particulars of any given culture group, such as the marriage or subsistence pattern of a group of people or even traditions as a broader term.

Thus, the question of modernity and the relationship between the concepts of nature and of culture are deeply debated. Some consider culture to be 'man's secret adaptive weapon' (Greenwood & William, 1977: 393) in the sense that it is the core means of survival. For some others, "culture emerges from nature as the symbolic representation of the latter. As culture is a subclass of nature (the most inclusive class) nature cannot be fully specified using ordinary language, which is a kind of symbolic culture. If culture gives meaning to nature, then nature gives meaning to culture (humans adapt), and so on ad infinitum… the opposition of nature and culture is therefore a pseudo-problem arising out of reflexive symbolic constructs (ordinary language) within culture itself." (Ellen, 1996: 31) More modern views show that culture is valued more than nature because everyday aspects of culture have a wider impact on how the

humans see the world, rather than just our genetic makeup. Older anthropological theories have separated the two, such as Franz Boas, who declared that social organisation and behaviour is not necessarily the passing of hereditable traits, rather it is purely the transmission of social norms. (Bennett, 2015)

It seems that the nature-culture divide is deeply intertwined with the social versus biological debate, since they both are implications of each other. According to Levi-Strauss, "the symmetry postulated between nature and culture involves the assimilation of natural species on the cultural place." (Lévi Strauss, 1962: 124-125) But this aspect of the debate goes too far for the analysis of my participants' activity. As we argued, sometimes it is better to simplify a subject to understand its general traits.

Although the debate is far deeper than that, one can argue that Yann and Corinne have implemented a dynamic and an activity that reconcile both concepts. Their activity – which is eco-tourism – has linked nature with culture in an authentic way. Eco-tourism, although it is quite debated, "is a new concept, it is a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low impact and it is an alternative commercial to mass tourism." (Aregawi, 2016:3) The role of eco-tourism is, for certain, very important. Correspondingly, Yann and Corinne fully included nature in their activity and made the choice to contribute to local communities and resources. Therefore, "the role of eco-tourism is undeniable for the socio-economic development of the local communities, for rapid socio-economic development, capable of generating foreign exchange reduces unemployment and improving the standard of the people." (Belaye, Woldesenbet, Worta, 2017 :1)

One can argue that by migrating in the south of France to develop a touristic activity in order to pursue and share their quest for authenticity, they succeeded to reconcile nature and culture, as each entity lives entirely and authentically, in close collaboration. As we explained throughout the paper, the relationship host/guest enables reciprocity between individuals and places, making the cultural exchange unique and authentic, and putting nature at the center of the authentic experience. It seems that Yann and Corinne argue that for an alternative way of life where we – as individuals and humans being a part of the biodiversity – collaborate rather than exploit nature to live by side peacefully. The latter being in opposition with polluted cities. Although it can be 'image' represented in the mind of the people who desire a rural idyll, it appears that it is a challenge that Yann and Corinne tackled. From dream to reality, with the challenges and difficulties that this alternative lifestyle can create, this performing family allied their desire to feel connected to nature without isolating themselves or cutting ropes with our established capitalist system and society and the cultural heritage that it offers.

Conclusion

Any ethnographic methods fall into the broader category of qualitative methodologies and are aimed at understanding cultural practices, human beliefs and behaviours, and social-cultural changes over time. During this research, the aim was to understand better the process of lifestyle migrations, especially in rural areas. With the growing environmental movement and people who run away from cities and urban poles because of the poor quality of life, rural areas are more and more coveted by people who want to be nearer to natural and peaceful places. In this paper, we wanted to comprehend in more details how people can change drastically their way of life, and why. We found many reasons, but one that is predominant remains the desire to feel more connected to nature and have a better quality of life. In this context, we met Yann, Corinne and their two daughters who, three years ago, decided to move to the South of France and start their life's project: Destination Ailleurs, an eco-tourism project which aims at inspiring people with the same aspirations, but not only. Their touristic place is also a way for them to share customs, languages, opinions and learn from others. Knowing my informants well, I have no doubt that this project has seen the light for many important reasons that they reflected upon before doing it. To my eyes, they are not the typical individuals who join *utopian projects*, such as eco-villages or intentional communities that hope to live outside of the system. Before moving out, they planned and thought of a way to have a better life quality, but still decided to be a part and participate to the current eco-politico capitalist system. They did not want to live off-grid, isolated from everyone and everything. They made a conscious choice to give the means to their desires – namely, living surrounded by nature rather than buildings. They dreamt of a rural idyll, but kept their feet anchored to reality so as to make their dream feasible. For that, we have seen throughout the paper that in their quest for authenticity, they made the anthropological concept of authenticity the central and the key point of their project.

They created a tourism of the authentic positioning themselves (as a performing family) and nature (that they cherish and from which they had the inspiration to move out) at the center of the project. By doing that, they were able to have reciprocity in their exchange – share skills, knowledge and experiences – but were also able to perform as a family with a social role for each of them. Their tourism of the authentic is based on the dichotomy of urban and rural environments – commonly thought to be fundamentally opposed. The representation of these

concepts in the mind of those who imagined it is so impregnated of common ideas, such as peaceful and beautiful rural settings in opposition with a loud and polluted urban environment, that their touristic attractions can be called authentic only through this opposition. In general, it is in the duality that these concepts embody that authenticity can emerge.

During my research, I had expectations and theories. Thankfully, I was able to verify my theories so as to draw conclusions. For this whole research paper and film, the first statement I can make is that the persons that I met were wonderful and very inspiring. By knowing them and their situation in depth, I was able to assess fairly the pros and cons of their change of life, their success but also their difficulties and challenges.

During the fieldwork, Yann and Corinne confessed to me that even though life can be hard and intense due to the many limitations that rurality has – such as having a high school two hours far from their home – life there is definitely a peaceful life. They told me they felt privileged to live daily this alternative lifestyle in the mountains. My informants never regretted to have made this decision. Their quality of life definitely improved their happiness too. The development of their daughters is highly positive as they know way more skills than before and appear to be way more autonomous than when they were living in the Parisian region. Emma and Camille told me that they felt happier and calmer here than in Paris and that they would never want to go back there or trade their current life, even though they miss their old friends. Images of rural idyll may be influenced by a lot of factors, such as media, children's tales, other persons etc, but it still seems that being in contact in nature makes anyone more peaceful and happier. Maybe is it not a myth or an idyll, but only a realization that is being spread over the world?

It is a fact: more and more people *feel* unable to continue their lives in urban environments. A loud, saturated, busy, rapid and polluted environment does not soothe people. I believe there is a difference in degrees between extreme off-grid individuals who cut themselves to society and live in the forest, between eco-villages and intentional communities and between people who adopt an alternative lifestyle that suit them better. The point is that many people in city – usually from the same social class, namely middle-class, suffocate. Is this because cities lack nature and natural environments? Is it because we separated ourselves so much from biodiversity and nature that now we finally realise that it is also a part of our inner selves? It seems that each story is different, but what remains is this fact: nature and culture – as they are defined in the simplest way so as to not go too deep in this complex debate – seems compatible with each other. Yann, Corinne and their two daughters succeeded in reconciling both aspects of life and society with their eco-tourism and idyllic project.

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