

**ESTER BARDONE**

My farm is my stage: A performance  
perspective on rural tourism and  
hospitality services in Estonia



DISSERTATIONES ETHNOLOGIAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

4

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The council of the Institute for Cultural Research and Fine Arts has, on October 25, 2013 accepted this dissertation to be defended for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnology.

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## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- Article I** Võsu, Ester (2010). Metaphorical Analogies in Approaches of Victor Turner and Erving Goffman: Dramaturgy in Social Interaction and Dramas of Social Life. – *Sign System Studies*, 38 (1/4), 130–165.
- Article II** Võsu, Ester & Kannike, Anu (2011). My Home Is My Stage: Restaurant Experiences In Two Estonian Lifestyle Enterprises. – *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 5 (2), 19–47.
- Article III** Bardone, Ester; Rattus, Kristel & Jääts, Liisi (2013). Creative Commodification of Rural Life from a Performance Perspective: A Study of Two South-East Estonian Farm Tourism Enterprises. – *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 44 (2), 205–227.
- Article IV** Võsu, Ester & Sooväli-Sepping, Helen (2012). Smoking Out Local Traditions? Identity and Heritage Production in Southeast Estonian Rural Tourism Enterprises. – *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore*, 51, 77–108.

All published papers are included in the hard-copy version of the thesis but have been removed from the electronic version due to copyright restrictions.

### AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION:

**Article II:** The author proposed the research design, conducted the fieldwork (partly co-conducted with Anu Kannike), composed the analytical framework and wrote parts of the data analysis.

**Article III:** The author formulated the research questions, wrote the theoretical introduction and the analytical framework, and the analysis of one case study; and participated at discussing the analysis of the second case. The author is responsible for the last revision of the manuscript.

**Article IV:** The author proposed the research design, conducted the fieldwork (partly co-conducted with Helen Sooväli-Sepping), formulated the research questions, composed the theoretical and analytical framework, and the majority of the data analysis. The author is responsible for the last revision of the manuscript.

# I. INTRODUCTION

A colleague, after a presentation of my research project, once said: “Of course rural life is performed by tourism entrepreneurs because there is almost nobody left to deal with agriculture in the countryside!” This comment, although it pointed to some important issues that will later be discussed in this thesis, disturbed me at the time, yet it also forced me to think about how to advocate the performance perspective for rural tourism entrepreneurship. Performance, especially as a theatrical metaphor, seems to give us a well-known analogical understanding about social life as staged and acted (see critical analysis of that in Article I). In tourism and business, a performance perspective seems to fit especially well because both realms are involved in impression management, convincing and manipulating the consumer. Furthermore, my colleague’s assessment of the rural situation in Estonia pointed to another hotly debated topic in international tourism studies and cultural theory, namely, the question about the authenticity of events and services provided for (rural) tourists. This debate, indeed, also concerns rural research because of the structural changes in European rural areas and ways of life in the last decades, leading not only to the question *how/why is rural life performed?* but also *what is rural today?* My concern in this dissertation is not to judge if rural tourism in Estonia is corrupting the “real” or “traditional” rurality by “false” or “faked” performances. I believe that a performance perspective on rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship<sup>1</sup> can reveal more than that if viewed in an interdisciplinary research context.

In anthropological and ethnological research a reflexive attitude towards one’s research often means to share the story of getting to the “field”. In that sense my explorations did not start with a physical encounter with “the other” (be it domestic or foreign) but rather with an expedition to theoretical territories, which were united under an umbrella concept – ‘performance’. It was an academic trip that started from theatre research, leading to performance studies and cultural semiotics, then into European ethnology, and later to multiple disciplinary territories, where the “travelling concept” (Bal 2002; Neumann & Nünning 2012) of performance took me. In due course my empirical interests started taking shape and finally led to the actual field sites and the rural tourism enterprises of Estonia. I was attracted to the micro-scale rural entrepreneurs whose tasks, in many respects, resembled the ones of a theatre director, and likewise the professional dynamics in which one person

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<sup>1</sup> I distinguish between tourism and hospitality because not all enterprises studied in this dissertation are providing tourism services (including accommodation) according to common definitions. ‘Hospitality’ is used in a broader sense, as a form of social and economic exchange, in order to encompass enterprises that provide food and beverages (e.g. home restaurants) without accommodation or other tourism services (cf. Bell 2009; Lynch et al. 2011).

often needs to take multiple roles and develop several skills and competencies (cf. with the project-based theatre). I noticed that the services provided in these small tourism businesses could be studied *as* performances because they involved scripts, roles (acting, costumes), settings, etc. However, after several field experiences and while working on articles that are included in this dissertation, I started recognising that performance, as a conceptual tool, may lead to far more complex heuristics than a mere theatre analogy. Therefore, in the framing text of this thesis I want to demonstrate not only how rural tourism enterprises can be studied *as* performances but also how the entrepreneurs whom I met, and the services that I have studied changed the way I think about performance and its explanatory potential.

My understanding of performing services in the context of rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship is influenced by social constructivist and phenomenological views on cultural practices, especially social interactionism, that sees individual actors as active agents in the meaning making process and pays attention to how individuals perceive, experience and act in the world (cf. Bruner 2005). I subscribe to the methodological viewpoint that “a study of creative practices must imply not only what actors do, but also their perception of their own and others’ actions. We must at the same time describe their understanding of practice and their practicing of understanding.” (Førde 2009: 95) Additionally my former background as a theatre researcher has given me training in performance analysis (see Pavis 2003) turning attention to both meanings as well as material and embodied elements that constitute performances. A Goffmanian approach to social performance and dramaturgy in which impression management has an important role (Goffman 1959; Goffman 1974 – see further discussion in Article I) and Richard Schechner’s broad spectrum approach to performing in different cultural situations (Schechner 2002; Schechner 2003) also fed the methodological stance of the dissertation.

In order to further clarify my position in the existing research I provide an overview of the key themes and terms used in the study in order to show how issues that originate from the different disciplinary and empirical domains connected to each other. I start with a reference to structural changes in European rurality and the challenges it has posed to rural research, which are then related with the developments in rural tourism and associated studies. Next I will introduce cultural approaches to entrepreneurial practice that have shaped my understanding of rural tourism entrepreneurship. All in all, the following review of literature and terminology aims to demonstrate why performance is a relevant conceptual tool for making sense of rural tourism entrepreneurs’ practices today and sets the grounds for articulating the aims, objectives and scope of my thesis. The last section of the introduction will give an overview of the overall structure of the dissertation showing how different parts of the text, including publications, are related to each other.

## **1.1. Structural changes in European rurality and challenges for rural research**

After the Second World War, the European countryside has been shaped by different global and transnational political and economic processes as well as technological innovations, which were primarily related to the decline in agricultural production leading to structural changes in rural areas, societies and cultures. These changes have likewise been facilitated by more recent rural developmental policies that are actively promoting tourism as a strategy for revitalising rural areas and providing alternatives for declining agriculture. Though the distinction between rural and urban lies deep in the European culture and symbolically rurality still plays an important role in national imageries (Unwin *et al.* 2004), *the rural* has acquired several new meanings in the “post-productivist situation” (see Ilbery 1998; Marsden *et al.* 1993). The European countryside has increasingly become characterised as a diversified, heterogenous and hybrid in terms of land use, social structure, economic activities, and representations (see overview of these changes and reflections on recent developments Árnason *et al.* 2009; Figueiredo & Raschi 2013). Modern rural areas are heterogeneous, multifunctional spaces in which the boundaries between urban and rural are often blurred because of people’s jobs, lifestyles, consumption patterns, etc. Urban and rural values, lifestyles and identities are increasingly more intermingled not only as a result of tourism but also due to in-migration and gentrification (George *et al.* 2009; Phillips 2010).<sup>2</sup> In this situation it is appropriate to ask how contemporary rurality is constructed, represented and performed by different actors. Although the structural changes in rural areas and societies took place later, and with different trajectories in the post-socialist Europe (see Hann 2003; Lerman *et al.* 2004; Unwin *et al.* 2004) the shift from production to consumption is now noticeable everywhere in rural areas regarding re-production, re-negotiation and re-configuration of places, activities and lives (Horáková & Boscoboinik 2012).

If the farmer was historically a dominant rural entrepreneur then today rural entrepreneurship has become a multifarious domain. A recent definition describes the rural entrepreneur as “an individual who uses the resources of the regional economy; geographical, physical, topographical, labour, and so on, in order to gain a competitive advantage by trading in goods or services which

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<sup>2</sup> The topic of gentrification comes from urban studies and has been used for describing the renewal and revitalisation of certain neighbourhoods (e.g. former working-class housing; abandoned factory buildings). In rural settings gentrification may be associated with the in-migration of urban (middle and upper middle class) residents to the countryside for establishing new houses and living environments that are more upscale in comparison with the surroundings. It may be associated also with the introduction of fancier lifestyles into rural areas. The process of rural gentrification involves material and social as well as structural transformations in existing communities (see the discussion on the meanings of the concept and its relevance for studying the impact of rural tourism in George *et al.* 2009).

ultimately generate social or economic capital for the rural environment in which the entrepreneur is located” (McElwee & Atheron 2011: 382). My interest in this study is something this definition does not explicitly consider, namely, *cultural resources* that tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs use as well as (re-)create.

Structural changes have happened hand in hand with the development of leisure and touristic attitudes, the countryside has acquired an increasingly recreational and consumerist value whether for daily visitors, tourists, conservationists, or incoming residents (Kneafsey 2001). Accordingly, the service sector, including tourism and hospitality, has become an increasingly more important part of the rural economy, influencing the change in cultural values and meanings – the ways traditional rural landscapes and traditional practices of rural life are interpreted and used in people’s identity construction have changed considerably (Daugstad 2008; Haartsen *et al.* 2000). Representations and meanings of *the rural* today have been shaped by the romantic movement and nostalgic feelings towards the countryside as “a place of nature, pastoral landscapes and authentic experiences” (Bell 2006: 150) whereas the urbanisation of rural areas has constantly increased, agriculture modernised and landscapes changed (Murdoch 2003).<sup>3</sup>

So how to define and study contemporary rurality? Facing the complexity of rural problems has made distinct disciplines that study rurality more and more inter-connected looking for conceptual and methodological cross-fertilisations and exchanges. Post-productivist transformations have posed a challenge to rural studies which in recent decades has re-conceptualised rural(ity) as an object of research paying increasingly more attention to cultural transformations that the changes have caused (see Cloke *et al.* 2006; Woods 2011). Revising *the rural* means accepting the need for more elaborate research into the cultural dimensions of rural space and rural life in interconnection with social and political issues such as the neoliberalist economy, entrepreneurship, commodification, regional development and planning, rural policies, marginalisation and social exclusion, migration and counter-urbanisation, sustainability, etc. The “cultural turn” in rural studies has likewise legitimised not only the concept of performance but also representation, discourse, narrative, hybridity, etc. as accepted topics in the analyses of rural life. The turn towards performance in rural studies may be related to the closer interest in rural practices at a micro-level and in people as active agents. Furthermore, the focus on performance is in tune with the interest towards more-than-representational approaches (Carolan 2008) that aim to look for complementary understandings of rurality as consisted of representations (e.g. texts, images) and how it emerges in social constructions, especially in discourses (see Cloke 2006; Edensor 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, idyllic countryside as a social construction may have little to do with the rural realities where crises and conflicts may dominate in people’s everyday lives (cf. Neal 2009: 5).

The substantial changes in contemporary rural life make it difficult for a researcher to encompass the complexity of rural transformations as well as to assess which are the most appropriate theoretical and methodological tools that could be used for studying these changes (Horáková & Boscoboinik 2012; Wieruszewska 2010). For example, new rural policies in the European Union propagating the multi-functionality of the countryside and subsidising the development of regional cultures, forces cultural researchers to revise the concept of 'rurality' along with the concepts of 'traditions' and 'heritage' (cf. Jöhler 2002). At the same time history, tradition and heritage are important parts of a contemporary rural economy not just as economic vehicles but also as identity resources (Graham & Howard 2008). The topics like *rural community* or *units of production* have also not lost their relevance for ethnological researchers, but the way they should be studied is considerably different from the historical ethnological research focusing on peasant culture (see Leimu 2010).

One of the leading researchers in rural geography, Michael Woods, claims that the field has welcomed qualitative research as well as new conceptual and analytical frameworks, yet, he admits, there has been little critical discussion on how new methodologies have actually changed what and how it is studied. Woods himself recommends 'performance' as a useful concept for studying contemporary rural spaces and lives and mentions three main research topics that could be investigated from this angle: (1) rural communities (social interaction and collective practices that constitute the rural); (2) work on farm households (embodied practices and the formation of farm identities; gender roles in farming); (3) rural tourism (tourist enactments and multisensory experiences of the rural related to diverse activities) (Woods 2010: 837–838).

I devote my attention in this study on rural tourism and particularly on tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs' as key actors, their activities, intentions and services enacted for the tourists. Considering the methodological focus of the thesis I want to contribute to the studies that consider "rural people as active agents in multiple processes of transformation, which have global and transnational as well as local and region-specific dimensions" (Kay *et al.* 2012: 55) to complement the research on central institutions, policies and macro-developments. However, I likewise take into consideration the cultural context and rural changes in Estonia as well as inferences of the rural tourism practice on individual identity processes.

## **1.2. Rural leisure and tourism: Traditions and new trends**

As rural tourism and hospitality enterprises are the main objects of my study, some clarification about how rural leisure and tourism can be understood both historically and in the present situation; and what problems a researcher faces while dealing with these topics is required. Leisure and recreation are a wider phenomena than tourism (as a form of leisure activity) that has developed relatively recently in European history (Butler *et al.* 1998; Löfgren 2012; Rojek *et al.* 2006). The history of the countryside as a leisure destination is related to different lifestyles of distinct social classes and ideas about how people should holiday (Löfgren 1999; Roberts & Hall 2001). Rural tourism cannot be looked at separately from the viewpoint of only leisure, but also in the frames of modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation.

Country walks and rambles have been popular recreational activities amongst the upper and middle classes for centuries, also because they could develop a distanced relationship to the rural labour and landscapes. However, the countryside has been a place for leisure and retreat not only for the social elite who owned villas but also for lower social classes who experienced everyday leisure (e.g. laying about while resting from work; chatting at social gatherings, etc.) as well as seasonal holidays and festivities (e.g. fairs, carnivals) (Towner 1996: 45–51). Since the late 19th century, the countryside also increasingly became a place of leisure for urban working class people who looked for shelter in farms where farmers' wives took care of the visitors before homely hospitality became commodified in a contemporary sense (see Bouquet 1987), or established their own shacks or cottages alongside with allotments (Towner 1996: 243).

Temporary trips to the countryside for pleasure (visiting relatives or friends) expanded rapidly after the improvement of means of transportation (bicycles, railway, buses, cars) in the late 19th and early 20th century, and travelling itself became part of the leisure experience (Towner 1996: 255–257). Rural settings became a popular place for retreat and relaxation for urbanities overwhelmed with the stress of indoor life and work. The growing middle class brought to the countryside the summer cottage culture, shaped by a nostalgic longing for nature and a peasant heritage, values like privacy and a family centred life away from urban chaos were celebrated (Löfgren 1999: 131–140; Löfgren 2012: 347).

The contemporary multifunctional countryside in Europe has become the site of diverse tourist attractions and leisure activities. It is “a realm of diverse tourist attractions as farms diversify their sources of income and other rural entrepreneurs, landholders and politicians seek to identify potentially marketable buildings, rituals and customs, landscapes, histories and signs of ‘tradition’” (Edesor 2006: 488). The existing natural and cultural elements of rural places, including communities and people's lives, acquire new meanings in the context of commodification. According to the neo-marxist approach, the commodification process emerges when a community's culture, previously

developing as a lived experience, has moved from a self-regulating process to a consciously acknowledged commodity with an economic value, packaged and offered for consumption (Crouch 2006: 355; George *et al.* 2009: 35–36). From the business perspective, the ideology of “experience economy” (Pine & Gilmore 1999) sees experiences as new commodities and tourism marketing as paying special attention to designing experience-services and -attractions (see Morgan *et al.* 2010; Scott *et al.* 2010).

Novel rural commodities include events and services staged for tourists that have become niche products targeted at urban dwellers (Perkins 2006: 248–249). The process of commodification has become increasingly significant in understanding modern rurality and its position in contemporary culture; leisurely consumption of the countryside creates changing representations of rural life, settings and activities (Cloke 2007; Crouch 2006). The countryside is consumed today also as a place for adventure, adrenaline sports and other niche activities.

Máiréad Nic Craith and Ullrich Kockel point out that cultural tourism has come to be regarded as the solution to problems of economic development, especially for peripheral rural regions. According to the logic of the neo-liberalist economy, local cultures seem to be “endogenously renewable resources” as local people are responsible for keeping their culture and thereby identity alive (Craith & Kockel 2002: 234). At the same time neoliberalist ideology has an impact on the emergence as well as disappearance of certain cultural forms and expressions. Revitalising, advertising, and marketing rural places and identities are increasingly creating a competition between places “against one another in the open (and unregulated) market for a share of the capital investment cake” (Philo & Kearns 1993:18 – cit. in Butler *et al.* 1998: 119). Rural tourism and hospitality businesses have changed the representations and displays of rural life, sites and activities, but these transformations also reflect the ideology and demands of the contemporary experience economy.

The difficulties with defining what is rural tourism are related to the changes in modern rurality as well as to transformations in the practice itself. For example, farm-based tourism, that has a long tradition in many European countries and that is often perceived as a possibility to “(re)experience one’s childhood or the lives of not so distant ancestors” (Hjalager 1996) is not what it used to be some decades ago. The transformation from tourism in farms into farm tourism is noticeable as a trend (see Busby & Rendle 2000). Farm accommodation has become complemented with experience services that use both local culture (e.g. heritage, food) as well as nature (e.g. hikes) as additional resources (see Haugen & Vik 2008: 325).

Today rural tourism is understood as an umbrella term for complex, multifaceted activities (e.g. ecotourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism, heritage tourism, food and wine tourism, etc.) of which agritourism or farm holidays are only a part (Farrell & Russell 2011; Lane 2009). Bernard Lane’s often quoted characteristics of rural tourism formulated in 1994 raise several

questions today as the notions of his definition – “rural area”, “functionally rural”, “rural in scale” and “traditional in character” (Lane 1994) – may be understood rather differently in varied national contexts and institutional or organisational discourses (cf. Roberts & Hall 2001: 11–16). Urban forms of tourism and non-traditional businesses have been introduced in rural settings, therefore it is useful to look at rural tourism through the urban-rural continuum; as political, economic and social structures in rural areas become increasingly urban in nature along with new rural commodities (Sharpley 2004: 376–377).

In this thesis I have focused my study on limited cases from Estonian rural tourism and hospitality enterprises that, nevertheless will bring out the following trends: (1) the importance of using cultural heritage as a resource in tourism services; (2) introduction of new forms of niche business into rural settings; (3) creative combination of rural as well as urban elements in the services provided. In this text framing the thesis I will provide further discussion on how rurality is used, created and performed in these enterprises considering both embodied enactments of entrepreneurs’ as well as particular material settings.

### **1.3. Entrepreneurship as a cultural and performative practice**

My understanding of entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur’s role in society is encouraged by the broader “cultural turn” in the studies of economic processes that have paid attention to how culture is constructed in contemporary economical discourses and practices (Berger 1991; du Gay & Pryke 2002; Ray & Sayer 1999). I position my approach to entrepreneurship also into the Scandinavian tradition, especially in recent interdisciplinary studies integrating cultural and business research (Löfgren 2003; Löfgren 2005; Löfgren & Willim 2005; Hjorth & Seyaert 2004; Hjorth & Kostera 2007; O’Dell & Billing 2010; Steyaert & Hjorth 2003). A cultural perspective enables to contextualise entrepreneurship and respectively helps to understand how entrepreneurial practice works in a particular culture and at a particular time. I see entrepreneurs as cultural actors (admitting that the entrepreneurial activity combines, uses and (re)creates economic, social as well as cultural resources), and as active cultural agents who make sense of their identities and activities (Anderson 2005; Bjerke & Rämö 2011). Entrepreneurship is a suitable topic for a qualitative and interpretivist approach because its sources are often “retrospective opinions and memories of entrepreneurs, which are contextual and socially constructed” (Rosa, Carter & Hamilton 2012: 106)

Contemporary service work, especially, “involves both economic and other forms of cultural knowledge, the identity of services is simply not amenable to representation in terms of a binary divide between ‘economics’, on the one hand, and ‘culture’, on the other. Rather than being solely an ‘economic’ or cultural phenomenon, service work is a contingent assemblage of practices built up from parts that are economic and non-economic (but always already cultural)

and forged together in the pursuit of increased sales and a competitive advantage.” (du Gay & Pryke 2002: 4) Although, it must be added that in everyday discourse as well as in some disciplinary usages, culture and economy often remain distinct domains; and for certain analytical purposes it may be necessary to keep this distinction in order to examine how certain cultural phenomena that were part of everyday practice become commodified, sold and marketed according to the logic of capitalist economy (see Kockel 2002). Therefore, I consider culture both as a resource for entrepreneurial practice, as well as its outcome, and choose performance as the main lens through which to examine service creation, enactment and mediation in tourism and the hospitality business.

Furthermore, during the last few decades, the business practice itself has been borrowing concepts, metaphors and approaches from other cultural domains, including theatre (see Löfgren & Willim 2005; Thrift 2002; Wood 2002). Dramaturgical theory is fitting for studying commercial settings because impression management and persuasion are key social skills an entrepreneur should master (Baron & Markman 2000).

Theatre related concepts have been analytically useful not just for drawing general parallels between the stage and business, but also for understanding the specific theatricality of entrepreneurial practice and the devices and “cultural repertoires” (cf. Dorleijn & Vanstiphout 2003; Taylor 2003) used. Together with social constructivist theories, theatre-driven approaches in entrepreneurship studies have led researchers to reconsider the familiar and taken-for-granted, and to understand that the entrepreneurial practice in many respects is similar to the social process of everyday life; composed of stories, characters, certain social scripts, dramaturgical principles and enactments. Anniken Førde believes that the “performative turn” has brought to the scholars’ focus the importance of cultural context and cultural interpretations of the entrepreneurial practice and the complexity of the entrepreneurial process (Førde 2009: 94).

My study is not so much positioned in a particular disciplinary context but rather into a theoretical context that can be characterised as a “performance perspective”.<sup>4</sup> Although theories of performance in social anthropology have brought up the following qualities – process, doing, emerging, change – of cultural practices (see Turner 1988), performative conceptualisation of entrepreneurship is rarely found in organisational and business anthropology. It is rather the social constructivist qualitative approaches in organisational and business research that have adopted the performance perspective, especially relying on Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical theory or metaphorical analogy of theatre (see literature review in Anderson 2005 and a discussion on the uses of theatre analogy in Article I).

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that in economical entrepreneurship literature the term ‘performance’ may be used differently, for signifying the accomplishment of economic activities.

However, it should be clarified here that the way theatre metaphor works for explaining staging and performing processes in large firms and corporations is quite different from small and micro businesses (cf. Lindh de Montoya 2000). There are different types of theatre institutions that may work as an analogy here (e.g. small businesses may be compared to small troupes and one-man-shows). An important characteristic of several rural tourism and hospitality businesses is that they are usually micro-scale enterprises (e.g. sole proprietors, self-employed entrepreneurs, family businesses) that are substantially different from large enterprises in the tourism industry and provide a person or a family with the income to support the desired lifestyle (see Getz *et al.* 2004; Page & Ateljevic 2009). Lifestyle entrepreneurship is a good example of an entrepreneurial practice in which a consciously selected lifestyle is prioritised over a focus on business growth and profit maximisation (see Peters *et al.* 2009; Shaw & Williams 2004).

I strongly support the view that an entrepreneur is not simply an economic agent but an individual performing different roles in varied social contexts and encounters, and using creativity and improvisation in the process of practice. As Alistair Anderson suggests, “in practice entrepreneurship is a creative performance and deserves to be appreciated as an art form” (Anderson 2005: 599). Dramaturgical principles of entrepreneurship as performance reveals not only the strategies of impression management in order to convince customers, but also other ways how the entrepreneur participates in the social action, and how she or he makes sense of the resources at hand and the emergent or potential possibilities. Drawing attention to performing is relevant for understanding how the “entrepreneurial self” is crafted, how entrepreneurs present their self and create identities, make sense of social roles (‘characters’), events, different settings, relationships and experiences in entrepreneurial practice (Down 2006: 29). In addition, like an actor on stage, performance storytelling is something an entrepreneur should be able to perform in order to engage and enchant clients (Johansson 2004; Downing 2005).

An entrepreneur is someone who is able to combine different material as well as immaterial resources in order to make a living, gain capital and, who in the process, manipulates the cultural codes of the society (Lindh de Montoya 2000: 350). In other words, entrepreneurs are making use of a pre-existing cultural repertoire interpreting and combining it in individual ways and at the same time creating new cultural forms and expressions such as particular *experience services*. Such a view on entrepreneurs as “stage directors” of performances (e.g. services) likewise enables to highlight the dynamics between innovations and conventions, novelty with familiarity, in order to attract attention but at the same time avoid rejection by the audience (clients) (cf. Alter 1990: 252; Ward 2004).

#### **1.4. Aims, objectives and scope of the study**

Anthropological studies have been concerned with entrepreneurship, especially small-scale businesses, as a social and cultural process seeing entrepreneurial agency and entrepreneurs' intentional and strategic behaviour as an important focus for research (see historical overview of literature in Stewart 1991 and a more recent review of problems and ambiguities related to anthropological research in entrepreneurship studies in Rosa, Carter & Hamilton 2012). For example, in his classical study Fredrik Barth investigated the role played by an entrepreneur in the rural community, the complex relations existing between entrepreneurs and other community members, and showed the importance of the social and cultural dynamics between an individual and community (Barth 1963). Due to a different methodological focus the studies compiled into this dissertation are not aiming to investigate the entrepreneurial process in Estonian rural areas in its complexity. My study is limited to the rural micro-scale entrepreneurs, who are involved in tourism or the hospitality business, activities *as* stage directors and key performers, and some of their services *as* performances.

The principles behind selecting the entrepreneurs and services were guided by the idea not to focus on traditional accommodation-based (Bed & Breakfast type of) services but rather on services that are created in order to give to the tourists/clients an opportunity to experience something traditional and/or specific to a region (such as the smoke sauna; farm works or blacksmithing) as well as something that has been inspired by urban consumption patterns (such as a home restaurant). Many of the enterprises examined in varied publications can be characterised as lifestyle enterprises. Almost all of them have kept the word 'farm' in the name of their business, in order to stress the rurality, whereas with only one exception, none of the studied enterprises are involved in traditional agricultural production. All together, they provide insights into how an entrepreneurial practice may use and at the same time expand the existing (rural) cultural repertoire. The combinations of urban and rural, traditional and novel practices in rural settings enable to further examine the hybridity of modern rural entrepreneurship in Estonia. (The empirical materials and methods for their collection and study are further discussed in Chapter 4.)

I claim that the services and events that are performed (or enacted, displayed) to tourists are always 'staged' (i.e. planned, designed and calculated), at least to some degree, by entrepreneurs or personnel. I suggest that paying attention to small-scale rural tourism entrepreneurs *as* stage directors and performers reveals how they, as performative agents, use embodied mediation as well as particular materialities for creative production and reproduction of rurality. In the articles, that are compiled into this dissertation, the research is narrowed down, mainly to two aspects of performance perspective in the case of rural micro-entrepreneurship: (a) rural tourism or hospitality services that can be considered *as* performances; (b) entrepreneurial activity *as* a process of staging and performing such services. I am interested in how an entrepreneur

uses a cultural repertoire, personal skills and knowledge in order to create experienceable services for clients. However, in the framing chapter of the thesis I want to broaden this scope by elaborating the analytical approach that was fragmented in individual articles into a more homogenous perspective (in Chapter 2), as well as to add some macro-level analysis to the results in the concluding discussion (Chapter 6). Though the present thesis is an Estonian case study, its broader aim is to suggest an analytical framework for examining experience-based rural tourism services and performative entrepreneurial practices also in other cultural contexts and give insights into the changed rurality emerging from these services and practices drawing comparisons with broader European developments.

Although performances of services are social communicative situations which aims to impress as well as to engage the tourist/client, I have limited the focus of my study to the hosts' part because it has received relatively little attention in tourism theory, where performance has been used for understanding the way tourists react in the destinations they visit, the ways they use and interact with the space and their embodied experiences (Bærenholdt *et. al* 2004; Edensor 2006; Edensor 2009). Exceptionally Philip Crang has examined how tourism products and services are produced and performed by people working in the tourism industry and how they have been trained in order to fit their roles in institutional settings. In this performative workplace geography Crang turns his attention to the spatiotemporal simultaneity of production and consumption of services in, for instance, hotels and restaurants (Crang 1997: 137). Human geographer Tim Edensor has also elaborated on the roles personnel may perform in the tourism industry in different institutional settings distinguishing: (1) directors and stage managers (e.g. tour guides), (2) performers who enact local culture (e.g. performers of indigenous folk customs), (3) cultural intermediaries (e.g. negotiators or translators between tourists and locals) (Edensor 2001: 69–70).

In recent studies the interest in small-scale rural tourism entrepreneurs activities and interpretations has been increasing (Brandth *et al.* 2010; Brandth & Haugen 2011; Di Domenico & Miller 2012), which supports the need for such kind of research, especially for examination of the performative dimensions (cf. Galani-Moutafi 2013). In addition, a more detailed examination of tourists' experiences and impressions would have needed different methods for data collection and additional temporal resources that is beyond the scope of this dissertation and remains a topic for future research (see reflections on methods in Chapter 4 and future directions in Chapter 7).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> From the performance perspective tourists or clients are indeed co-creators of the service as a performance, yet they are not in the focus of my research because studying customers' actions and reactions would have needed different research objectives, scope and methodology (cf. Bruner 2005; Harrison 2003; Wearing *et al.* 2010). Tourists or clients of the enterprises are considered through entrepreneurs' intentions and narratives although I rely on some fieldwork observations and my own experiences as a tourist/client.

Considering the interdisciplinary research context and scope described above, **the overall aim of this dissertation is to critically examine the methodological potential of ‘performance’ for studying how tourism and hospitality services are staged and performed by Estonian micro-scale rural entrepreneurs as ‘stage directors’ and ‘key performers’**. The thesis suggests an interpretative framework for analysing entrepreneurs’ activities and tourism or hospitality services from the performance perspective.

Taking the framing chapter and all publications together the main objectives of the dissertation are the following:

1. to provide a critical analysis of theatre related metaphorical analogies in order to give a wider context for the theoretical ground of the dissertation and specify its focus (Article I; Chapter 2);
2. to examine the roles a rural micro-entrepreneur takes in the process of performing a service and providing experiences to the clients, what professional and personal challenges an entrepreneur needs to face; and how private or personal and public are intermingling in the process of performing (Articles II, III, IV; Chapters 2, 6);
3. to explore the ways in which cultural repertoire and performative devices are creatively used by rural entrepreneurs for commodifying traditional rural practices as well as introducing novel practices in the rural settings (Articles II, III, IV; Chapters 2, 3, 6);
4. to take a closer look at how entrepreneurs’ personal and cultural identities are expressed in rural tourism services (Articles II, III, IV; Chapter 6);
5. to discuss the opportunities and limits of staging and performing experience services in micro-scale rural tourism enterprises and to situate the problem of staging/performing rurality in these enterprises in the contemporary hybrid countryside (Chapter 6);
6. to critically evaluate assets and limitations of performance as a methodological tool for studying tourism and hospitality services in rural entrepreneurship and to propose possible future directions for research (Chapters 4, 6).

## **I.5. Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation consists of a framing text (composed of six sub-chapters) and of four publications that treat different aspects of the above stated research objectives.

In the introductory chapter I outlined the research territory, in which this interdisciplinary study is positioned: how the changes in contemporary European rurality make it relevant to look at the performance as a conceptual tool for interpreting these structural transformations; how performance and performing is situated in rural tourism research; and finally pointing to the possibility of studying entrepreneurship as a cultural and performative practice.

**Chapter 2** elaborates further on a particular performance perspective that is a conceptual synthesis underpinning performance as a methodological tool used in the separate articles. With this chapter my aim is to contribute to the existing performance methodologies providing a perspective on micro-scale rural tourism and the hospitality business. After considering the broader epistemological value performance has in cultural research, the main part of the chapter treats three intertwined issues: (1) commodification of rurality in the contemporary experience economy, specifying the active role of entrepreneurs as cultural agents in the process; (2) staging and performing services in the tourism and hospitality business as expressions of entrepreneurs' cultural creativity; (3) distinction of different roles entrepreneurs take in performing the service and the aspect of self-commodification related to it.

**Chapter 3** provides to the foreign reader a socio-historical backdrop that helps to contextualise the development of rural tourism enterprises in post-Soviet Estonia in the 1990s and the 2000s. The first part of the chapter gives an overview of the main changes that have taken place in Estonian rurality throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present, demonstrating how transformations related to the family farm culture and rural entrepreneurship are related to political, economical, social as well as cultural changes in Estonia, as well as in Europe. The second part of the chapter presents an outline of the history of rural tourism in Estonia with special attention on how the countryside acquired the meaning and value of a recreational and leisurely destination, and how farms as family homes and production units have become 'tourism farms'.

In **Chapter 4** a short overview of the empirical material (that is introduced in detail in each publication) is given and the principles behind selecting particular cases for the study further explained. The chapter describes how contacts with entrepreneurs were established, the ethical concerns related to the research, and what were the different roles the author had to perform during the research process. The chapter likewise provides further reflections on the methods used for data collection and analysis in relation to the previously described conceptual framework; bringing forth the specificity of performance that worked as a methodological tool at many levels helping to formulate the object of research, shaping ethnographical fieldwork, as well as interpreting the data.

The contents, main results and conclusions of four publications included in the dissertation are briefly summarised in **Chapter 5**. The first theoretical article is not explicitly focusing on the problems of performance related to rural tourism entrepreneurship. It is chosen as a general introduction to the broader topic from which this thesis is only a small part – how do concepts based on theatre analogy work in cultural research. The next three articles are each an analysis of a different rural tourism or hospitality service in Estonia from a performance perspective. Article II makes a bridge between theory and empirics focusing on

the study of restaurant experiences in two commercial homes situated in the countryside. Article III includes studies that are examples of the commodification of more traditional rural activities – farm works and blacksmithing – spotlighting two particular performances in two farms. Article IV sheds light on broader themes related to the production of cultural heritage and regional identities through setting up and performing the smoke sauna as a tourism service in southeast Estonia. The cases in Articles III and IV are both examples of how traditional rural practices have been transformed into performative and edutaining commodities in the context of the contemporary experience economy. The two restaurants examined in Article II in contrast represent the hybrid rurality, in which urban culinary values are combined with a rural setting.

The last part of the dissertation, **Chapter 6** contains the concluding discussion that adds new insights into issues already partly discussed in previous chapters, and in publications aiming to connect the micro- and macro-levels (such as rural policies and the ideology of experience economy) of performance perspective for studying rural tourism and hospitality businesses. The chapter addresses the challenges that staging and performing rurality pose to the entrepreneur and examines the possibilities for single entrepreneurs to create an added value of experience in the contemporary hybrid countryside. It is claimed that certain ideologies produce particular representations and values of the contemporary countryside and thereby facilitate certain performances of rural life. Finally, further ideas for developing an integrated performance perspective to performing rurality are suggested, incorporating discourses, representations and practices of rural agents.

The dissertation concludes with the summary in Estonian.

## **2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: A PERFORMANCE PERSPECTIVE ON RURAL TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **2.1. Performance perspective in cultural research: Epistemological considerations**

I have dedicated special attention to the contribution and assets of theatre analogy in cultural theories in Article I, therefore I would like to stress some aspects in this section that are specifically relevant to all case studies treated in publications compiled in this study. At different periods and in different disciplinary contexts ‘performance’ as a critical concept has been serving different methodological and epistemological aims (for an overview of the development of the concept in three main domains of usage – anthropology, sociology and linguistics – see Carlson 2004). It has become a “travelling concept” that is better characterised as a theoretical perspective or a conceptual field in which the territory is in a constant state of flux (cf. Bal 2002; Velten 2012).

The problem with performance is also puzzling because the borders between theatre and performance are not easily definable – multiple aesthetics, acting and directing techniques characterise modern theatre. Furthermore, theatre research has extended its territory towards studying performances or performative<sup>6</sup> events outside of theatre art, stressing that the methodological apparatus of the discipline can provide heuristic tools for the study of cultural processes (see Fischer-Lichte 2004); and an interdisciplinary field of *performance studies* has been established aiming to apply a broad spectrum approach to examining performance-like phenomena in culture (Schechner 2002; Schechner 2003). However, the performance perspective cannot be too narrowly based on theatre analogy and at the same time it cannot be stretched too far otherwise it will lose its explanatory power (see more detailed discussion in Article I). Anthropologist Edward L. Schieffelin warns that the uncritical use of performance brings to social sciences several moral and epistemological dilemmas related to truth and deceit, reality and imaginary, and to issues of inauthenticity, manipulation and power. He suggests to overcome such predicaments through detailed ethnographical investigations of particular practices and events (Schieffelin 1998: 201–202).

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<sup>6</sup> Here and henceforth I use the term ‘performative’ as a synonym for performance-like or characteristic to the performance. Performative and performativity have a different meaning in the context of linguistic and literary theories that is not engaged in the present dissertation (see discussion on the difference between the two conceptual domains – performative and performance – in Velten 2012).

What makes the use of performance as a theoretical or analytical concept complicated is the lack of consistent theoretical understanding as to what constitutes a performance, although the elementary condition for performance from the theatre research perspective is that somebody has to perform for someone who witnesses. The communication-based understanding of performance likewise stresses the importance of a meta-communicative frame that helps to understand and interpret the meanings that a performance may carry (Eco 1977). Nevertheless, different genres of performance in culture may vary considerably according to their aesthetics, aims, and means of communication, and the performative experience is not always possible to articulate in terms of meanings and references (Fischer-Lichte 2004). Therefore in some disciplinary contexts, performance-based theories have become related to non-representational or more-than-representational understandings of the cultural reality stressing the importance of emergence, immediacy, the role of embodied actions and actors, affectivity, mobility, etc. (Anderson & Harrison 2010; Carolan 2008; Thrift 2008).

As noted in the introduction, I rely on the constructivist understanding of the interrelated concepts of ‘performance’ and ‘staging’ (in German *Inszenierung*, in French *mise-en-scène*), that bring out different aspects of the cultural process. The latter indicates the ideas and the imaginary, and the former relates to the material, manifested dimension in which the staging is embodied.<sup>7</sup> Staging is what creates the coherence that holds the elements of the performance together (Pavis 2003: 37–38). However, the meanings of the performance emerge not in isolation but through comparisons with other performances, as well as, and through the overall cultural context. Therefore, we may say that it is the ‘staging’ of performances, whether in a theatre or in daily life, that sets up the interpretative frames (e.g. “this is a play”) and enables participants to understand the rules of action and the event (cf. Goffman 1974). For example, when tourists enter a particular setting, they are usually informed by these frames, i.e., certain tacit or explicit norms that guide action, communication and interpretation (cf. Edensor 2009: 547).

In the articles included for the dissertation I used both concepts of ‘staging’ and ‘production’, the former for stressing the personal creation of services or events by single entrepreneurs and the latter for underlining the collective creation of a cultural phenomenon (e.g. regional identity, heritage, etc.). This was partly due to the rare use of ‘staging’ in the Anglo-American performance-discourse, where instead the distinction between production and performance is made or it is assumed that performance, as an intentional act, presupposes some degree of staging (organising, planning) by a performer (Goffman 1959). The

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<sup>7</sup> In theatre research, staging is not a directly perceivable empirical object, but above all “an object of knowledge, a network of associations or relationships uniting the different stage materials into signifying systems, created both by production (the actors, the director, and the stage in general) and reception (the spectators)” (Pavis 1992: 25).

production of culture is an idea originating from sociology where it has been used to describe how the logic of the market and capital works in cultural processes (Bourdieu 1993) and from cultural studies where it has been applied in order to explain how cultural products are (re)produced, marketed and sold in the global economy (du Gay 1998). In a broader sense the production of culture or a specific cultural phenomenon is close to the idea of creation of something new from the existing reality.

There also exists the problem of terminological translatability. Even though the verb ‘perform’ and the noun ‘performance’ both have several meanings in English<sup>8</sup>, as a conceptual tool ‘performance’ carries the semantic burden related to theatre because metaphorical comparisons between theatre and life are popular in common reasoning (Rigney 2001: 143–161). Metaphorical undertones and the “semantic history” of the concept are rich in theatrical connotations, which is both its strength as well as weakness (States 1996). (See Article I in the dissertation.) In addition, even though the majority of cultural research nowadays is carried out in English, we cannot forget that multiple meanings and uses of ‘performance’ in an Anglophone context are not always smoothly translatable into the native languages in which we think, work and communicate with our fellow researchers, as well as to informants. For instance, the historical importance of the director’s institution in German theatre has inspired German scholars to use the concept of *Inszenierungsgesellschaft* or *Kulturinszenierung* in order to analyse the stagedness of contemporary society, especially media and politics (Willems & Jurga 1998; Willems 2009). In Estonian the words *etendama* (‘to perform’) and *etendus* (‘the performance’) are unequivocally related to the theatre and it is hard to extend the existing semantic sphere into a broader understanding in local use.

How is the concept of ‘performance’ more specifically related to rural tourism and the hospitality business, and to interpreting what rural entrepreneurs do? As already mentioned in the Introduction, ‘performance’ has been a fruitfully utilised concept in tourism studies (Coleman & Crang 2002; Crouch 2004; Edensor 2009), entrepreneurship studies (Downing 2005; Hjorth & Steyaert 2009) and also recently in rural studies (Woods 2010; Edensor 2006). All these fields of research have also fed my study. ‘Performance’ has been an analytical tool for examining staged events, “experience spaces” and techniques

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<sup>8</sup> Perform = (1) to carry out; execute; do: *to perform miracles*. (2) to go through or execute in the proper, customary, or established manner: *to perform the marriage ceremony*.; (3) to carry into effect; fulfil: *Perform what you promise*. (4) to act (a play, part, etc.), as on the stage, in movies, or on television. (5) to render (music), as by playing or singing. Performance = (1) a musical, dramatic, or other entertainment presented before an audience. (2) the act of performing a ceremony, play, piece of music, etc. (3) the execution or accomplishment of work, acts, feats, etc. (4) a particular action, deed, or proceeding. (5) an action or proceeding of an unusual or spectacular kind: *His temper tantrum was quite a performance*. (Source: Merriam Webster Online Dictionary. Online: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> Accessed: 10.10.2013)

applied in performative enactions (Bærenholdt *et al.* 2008; Edensor 2001). All in all, ‘performance’ has turned researchers’ attention to embodied and material practices, to how identities are created and enacted, and how places are displayed and inhabited in complex encounters between different social actors, environments, and technologies.

Performance is a complex epistemological perspective that is not reducible to a single model. Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor suggests that:

“Performance also constitutes a methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze events as performance. (...) to understand these [events] as performance suggests that performance also functions as an epistemology. Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing. The bracketing for these performances comes from outside, from the methodological lens that organizes them into analyzable “whole”. (...) The is/as underlines the understanding of performance as simultaneously “real” and “constructed”, as practices that bring together what have historically been kept separate as discreet, supposedly free-standing, ontological and epistemological categories.” (Taylor 2003: 3)

Taylor’s observations point out that performance is an analytical perspective a researcher applies for studying a cultural phenomenon, which not just enables the formulation of the units of research, but, most of all, makes researchers deal with its double status as something actually happening and imagined at the same time.

I support the claims made by Taylor, because performance helped me to define the units of study (services in tourism and hospitality businesses) and to see their constructed or staged nature, and entrepreneurs attempts to create and communicate certain meanings and values through the embodied medium. Yet, I realised that the epistemology of performance is even more complex than Taylor suggests and it changes while studying distinct events as well as throughout varied phases of the research process. While working on my dissertation I understood that performance works as a general theoretical lens that highlights particular characteristics of studied services and shapes my research questions. Performance also turned out to guide my fieldwork, turning the attention towards certain events, actions and constructions while leaving other dimensions related to rural tourism and the hospitality business behind the curtain. Performance likewise served as a helpful analytical device for interpreting fieldwork materials. To sum up, performance is both *what we study* in culture (an object of research) and *how we study* it (a methodology). Each cultural phenomenon studied through this lens requires the researcher to reconsider what *is* performance-like and what *is not* regarding the particular socio-cultural and historical context.

Performance theorist and theatre director Richard Schechner stresses the analytical distinction between events that (a) are considered performances in a studied culture and (b) events that are treated *as* performances by scholars

(Schechner 2002: 290). I want to make clear what I treat as performance in this dissertation – services provided in rural tourism and hospitality enterprises – are not necessarily considered performances by the entrepreneurs themselves. However, I believe that this analytical frame provides insights into this kind of rural entrepreneurship in Estonia, in the ways entrepreneurs use the cultural repertoire, the way they stage their services, the material and symbolic means they use for performing, and the messages they want to communicate. In a broader perspective the studied performances enable to create connections between micro- and macro-levels of staging and performing rurality in contemporary Estonia.

## **2.2. Towards a performance perspective on rural tourism entrepreneurship**

Michael Woods claims that in studies of modern rurality the focus on performing brings into light particular actions and embodied experiences that constitute rural life, including rural spaces. Furthermore, performance perspective “reveals how discourses of rurality are enacted and routinized with material effects, and showing how the practices and performances of rural actors in material settings contribute to the production and reproduction of discourses and representations of rurality” (Woods 2010: 836).<sup>9</sup> Tim Edensor, who has elaborated a performance perspective in tourism as well as rural studies, sees performance as a broad metaphorical concept suggesting that it guides us to analyse “how rurality is staged (socially and spatially regulated – E.B.) so as to accommodate particular enactments” (Edensor 2006: 484). He likewise emphasises the importance of performance in reproducing, consolidating as well as contesting rural space(s) as well as foregrounding rural identities. According to Edensor, the elements constituting performances that have analytical value could be: scripts, roles, forms of stage management, choreography, improvisation and reflexivity (*ibid.*). Indeed, different performances may have different dominant elements and hence the relevancy to study some in more detail than others.

Both authors distinguish different genres of rural performances that can be staged and enacted at individual as well as collective levels, considering the type of communication intended and the degree of staging:

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<sup>9</sup> Closely related to performing the rural are normative ideas of rural idylls and rural imagery that are created in different socio-historical contexts by different discourses (politics, media, literature, etc.) and the ideas of consuming the rural (marketing certain representations of rurality; commodifying rural places, activities and lives) (see Woods 2011).

- (1) *mundane performances of rural life* – e.g. performing routine, everyday practices, e.g. enacting farm works by a farmer as an embodied way of expressing and experiencing the rural (in contrast to representations in texts and images), often enacted unreflectively;
- (2) *collective performances* that are addressed to serve a rural community's own needs through shared experiences of doing something together and aim to strengthen community bonds and belonging to a place; as well as improvised performances that are initiated by and addressed to the local community (e.g. different celebrations, workshops, etc.);
- (3) *performing heritage attractions* – usually highly staged and scripted performances addressed to outside of the community, e.g. folk festivals organised by a local museum or by a community initiative; often related to creating “invented traditions” that nevertheless may serve bonding purposes for the community;
- (4) *performances explicitly staged for engaging tourists in action* – examples are educational workshops where rural life can be experienced in fun ways by learning-through-doing, but also by adventure and nature tourism activities. The latter type of performances are often aimed at attracting tourists and visitors, and may be regarded as part of the commodification of rural culture. (Edensor 2006; Woods 2010; Woods 2011)

In this dissertation I am developing the performance perspective similar to that suggested by Edensor taking into close consideration the performing agents – micro-scale rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs – and the services they enact for tourists/clients. My study is focused on the fourth type of performance mentioned in the list above, in other words, services staged and performed to clients in tourism and hospitality enterprises. I found it appropriate to study ‘experience services’ as performances, i.e. certain activities and events provided in rural tourism and hospitality enterprises with the aim to create possibilities for having different experiences of rurality and/or hospitality. I approached experience services as performances because analogically to theatre performances they involved ‘scripts’, ‘roles’ and ‘settings’ but also because such a perspective enables to shed light on creative ways of how rural micro-entrepreneurs use their personal knowledge and skills for staging and performing services and trying to combine individual values with market expectations.

Considering the above described epistemological and heuristic potential, I regard performance as a useful analytical tool for understanding; both how rural experience services are staged (produced) as well as enacted in particular material settings, and how entrepreneurs as ‘stage directors’ and ‘performers’ contribute to the creative production and reproduction of rurality and related values, identities and lifestyles. The concept of staging is part of the performance perspective useful for interpreting how entrepreneurs act *as if* stage directors, choosing what is, and what is not worth displaying to the clients. It likewise helps to make sense of how services are set up for public consumption, how they are organised, produced and (re)presented. Small-scale rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs’ tasks in service providing in many

respects resemble a small theatre organisation, taking into consideration that one or a few persons need to take multiple roles and develop various theatrical as well as extra-theatrical competences while staging as well as performing the service.

In the analytical perspective described in the following sections of this chapter I created a synthesis of varied theoretical and methodological ideas that guided the writing of single case studies included as parts of the thesis. Creating such synthesis enabled to: (a) delineate the role of entrepreneurs as active cultural agents in the process of rural commodification and their complex position as directors/performers in small-scale service management; (b) to examine the connections between staging and performing as culturally creative activities in the rural tourism and hospitality business; (c) to bring forth a more detailed distinction between the different roles entrepreneurs take and the different aspects of performing in small-scale entrepreneurial settings. I believe that this analytical perspective is one of the major contributions of my dissertation, although it can certainly be developed further towards integrating the micro- and macro-levels of staging and performing rurality as suggested by Woods (see reflections on future directions of research in Chapter 6).

### **2.2.1. Commodification of rurality in experience economy: The role of an entrepreneur as a cultural agent**

From a performance perspective it should be highlighted that ‘commodification’ is closely related to the concept of ‘staging’ – both are selective mechanisms choosing something from the cultural repertoire in order to create certain configurations and connections. Both are also related to the “the politics of value” (Appadurai 1986) or to the issue of added value – what is selected and considered valuable to sell as a commodity in a certain cultural context. It is likewise relevant to ask how is something staged in order to turn it into a commodity. As a result, new objects and activities may be given not just an economic but also a cultural value, also existing cultural values may become transformed in the process of commodification.

Paul Cloke succinctly argues that commodification of rural space becomes conceived as something “in which rurality is reproduced both as *an object of desire* and as a *stage on which to perform*. Much of the apparent creativity of rural tourism deepens the relationship with rurality, and therefore deepens its desire as a *place of performance*” (Cloke 2007: 46–47 – my italics E.B.). Furthermore, contemporary tourism and hospitality businesses are not expected to provide just a service but also some extra added value that is often called ‘experience’. This is also very true in rural settings that have increasingly become “theatres of consumption” for tourists and visitors whose “sensuous hunger is fed by more and more innovative commodified rural experiences” (Woods 2011: 99; 120).

In business and management consultancy literature, performance has gained researchers' attention in relation to the creativity and production of 'experiencescapes'<sup>10</sup> or experience services and entrepreneurs as stage directors (creators, producers) of these experiences. Pine and Gilmore, the key evangelists of the experience economy, suggest that companies and entrepreneurs learn how the key elements of the modern theatre – script, staging, actors, performing, stage or setting – work in business practice.<sup>11</sup> They connect scripting and staging the experience with the creation of a “themed setting” (Pine & Gilmore 1999).<sup>12</sup> Such settings are also defined as experiencescapes, i.e. staged spaces that are “generated through the manipulation of material culture around us” (O'Dell & Billing 2010: 15). Spatial organisation of experiencescapes may be studied like theatre scenography, which involves different techniques and devices for manipulating spatial and visual impressions, including creation of atmosphere<sup>13</sup> (cf. McAuley 1999). Like stage setting and action in theatre, experiencescapes are in mutual interconnection with the social practices they accommodate (cf. Bærenholdt *et.al* 2008).<sup>14</sup> These social practices may be seen as performances enacted both by service providers as well as by consumers. Tim Edensor points out that each experiencescape in tourism facilitates and also limits certain performances according to a varied degree of openness for spontaneous variations and by different actors (e.g. tourist guides) involved in the performance (Edensor 2009: 550).

The experience economy is mostly related to urban settings but through marketing and management discourses it is also adapted to rural settings that may provide less modern, novel or sophisticated experience services, but nonetheless aim to please clients' senses with rural attractions. In contrast to large themed settings created for urban mass-consumption, experiencescapes in

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<sup>10</sup> 'Experiencescape' is closely tied to the concept of 'themed environments' used by Mark Gottdiener for explaining how symbolic marketing initiated by entertainment corporations and media works in westernised societies (Gottdiener 2001).

<sup>11</sup> The type of theatre they use as an example is mostly a big professional theatre company with specialised competencies and divided tasks (multiple members of theatre personnel responsible both for pre-production as well as production related jobs) even though the authors admit that there exist also small scale, alternative, improvisatory theatre troupes and street theatre. Considering this structural difference in theatres' organisational cultures, in small-scale companies and family businesses the division of labour may be very different from medium size and large enterprises.

<sup>12</sup> The authors likewise suggest that clients should be viewed as “guests” who expect memorable experiences which are most likely those engaging all the senses.

<sup>13</sup> Atmosphere of a performance is a complex and hard to grasp phenomenon, which is emerging not only from the spatial constellations but may be constituted likewise by colours, lights, music, etc. (see Fischer-Lichte 2001).

<sup>14</sup> From the performance perspective it is worth mentioning the distinction between “enclavic tourist spaces” that are “purified and strongly circumscribed”, in which what is shown to the tourists or what they can do is highly regulated; and “heterogeneous tourist spaces” in which public and private, planned and unplanned structures intermingle and can be sites for diverse performances and improvisations (Edensor 2001: 63–64).

small rural settings may have different characteristics. For instance, as Daugstad and Kirchengast point out in their study, that in agritourism enterprises (such as summer farms that combine agriculture with tourism activities) there is an inherent overlap of private and public spheres, i.e. spaces used by hosts and tourists have to be shared, at least temporarily. The smaller the farm the more likely that the “front-stage” and “back-stage regions”<sup>15</sup> get blurred or fused, which increases the aura of intimacy in contrast to experiencescapes created for mass-tourism consumption (see Daugstad & Kirchengast 2013).

Commodifying experiences concerns not only spaces but also activities. Practices that have been part of rural inhabitants everyday life (such as farm works or food production) or rural recreational activities with a long history (horse riding, hiking, boating) have become part of the services offered in tourism enterprises (Perkins 2006). Farm works are transformed into “farm-work experiences” in which animals are presented as cute objects of affection and (traditional) farm works as edutaining fun; rural visitors are likewise engaged in different forms of hands-on activities (e.g. at workshops and courses) (cf. Daugstad 2008). Rural places with a long history are keen to sell heritage experiences in different forms of performances. Rural traditions are re-defined as local heritage that can be marketed to the others; village feasts and fairs attract numerous visitors who are looking for unique products and atmosphere (Larsen 2012). “The sensuous hunger of the tourist” has been fed likewise by innovative rural experiences that offer opportunities for exiting and adrenaline raising activities (e.g. various forms of adventure sports) (see Woods 2011: 120). Thus, the repertoire of potential sources for rural experiences is almost unlimited, although dependent on particular historical, social and environmental conditions of the region. However, from an ethical point of view the question arises – can all experiences be commodified; and at what price does this commodification takes place? (I will come back to this issue in the next sections.)

As already indicated in the introductory chapter, commodification of rurality is not only a part of economic but also of cultural production and it likewise has clear social consequences. The process of commodification, especially in the context of tourism, has been criticised due to its negative impacts on the environment as well as on local people and culture (e.g. increasing economic and social inequality; touristification of traditions and habits) (Lowenthal 2007). The extensive commodification of rural regions is claimed to modify them according to certain “countryside ideals” (e.g. re-creation of pre-industrial landscapes and commodities) which can stifle the articulation of local rural lives and identities (Hall *et al.* 2003: 12) and in the worst cases may even lead to the “creative destruction” of the place and the community (Mitchell 1998). If regulatory agencies (such as local government) are not following the process of

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<sup>15</sup> ‘Front-stage’ and ‘back-stage’ are used here in the sense Dean MacCannell (1999) has adopted them from Erving Goffman (1959).

extensive commodification, it may start working against itself (overcrowded by consumers, noise, congestion) and the place may lose its original attractiveness (Perkins 2006: 253).

Closely related to the critique of commodification is the question about the authenticity of (rural) culture or cultural phenomena and its loss. Dean MacCannell has used the concept of “staged authenticity” for characterising touristic places and attractions where only the managed “front-stage” is accessible to tourists and therefore false, inauthentic and manipulated experiences of the destination may arise (MacCannell 1999). Does the tourism-focused rural enterprise need to involve traditional farm works? How does the tourism entrepreneur meet the expectations of urban visitors who are searching for the “rural idyll”? Rural tourism and especially farm-based tourism seem to carry the burden of becoming the museums of production and display of agricultural heritage (e.g. demonstrating historical farm works and crafts) which, in turn, means competition with open-air museums as institutions that provide similar attractions to the visitors (cf. Bowen & De Master 2011). If farms become objects of tourist commodification, the tourism industry’s demands for “authentic” local cultures may lead to the inevitable creation of staged back-stage areas where real rural experiences are selectively designed for the tourists. It is inevitable that in the majority of cases where tourists have the opportunity to come into direct contact with agricultural or food production activities there will be at least some element of staging (cf. Daugstad & Kirchengast 2013; Phillip *et al.* 2010).

The issue of authenticity has been widely debated in tourism theory and instead of an object-centered approach it has become increasingly a question of subjective perceptions, albeit shaped by social constructions (Chaney 2002; Cohen 2002; Olsen 2002; Wang 1999). The question today is rather about ‘authentication’ – who constructs ‘authenticity’, under which conditions and purposes. Robert Shepherd claims that commodification is a social fact of our time and categorisations between commodities and non-commodities or authentic and inauthentic phenomena in culture are less fruitful than admitting that potentially all objects and experiences can be commodities. Taking this as a starting point the cultural researcher should rather focus on “how authenticity is constructed and gets decided” but also on “how people make meaning in their lives within the world of tourism” (Shepherd 2002: 194–196).

In contrast to the studies of commodification focusing on the “tourist gaze” (Urry 1990) David Crouch suggests that a performance perspective guides our attention to “self-actualisation”, “identity work” and “active reflexive and embodied consumption”. “Performance and its reflexive potential need not only operate from prefigured alternatives through the conscious enactment of ideologies but may be discovered and worked in and through embodied practice and the performance itself.” (Crouch 2006: 361) Although his interest lies in tourist–space encounters, the reflexive and identity constituting potential of performance has relevance also in the case of tourism entrepreneurs who

produce, through creating settings and services, particular material and embodied rural realities. Thus, from the cultural agent's point of view the process of commodification is closely related to reflexivity, including also reflections on what is the subject's role in the process of commodification.

### **2.2.2. Staging services as performances in rural tourism settings**

Before explaining how I see rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs as stage directors of experience services, I must address some critique that evolves around the topic *whether tourists/clients experiences can actually be staged?* Ethnologist Orvar Löfgren sees one of the major shortcomings of theatre analogy in marketing literature in the rationalisation of experience management because it promotes the possibility of producing something as ephemeral as consumers' sensory perceptions and moods. Albeit theatre is a form of creative artistic expression while used metaphorically, it may become a planning strategy that undermines the unpredictability and the role of consumers as co-authors of service experiences (Löfgren 2005: 27–28). I agree with the critique that experiences as such cannot be staged by entrepreneurs, and admit that experiences depend on clients expectations, their background, associations and interpretations.

Like a theatre director, an entrepreneur may create a certain setting, an atmosphere and perform strategically in order to attune clients' senses and mind; but the actual personal experiences diverse customers may have, how and when they emerge, cannot be fully predicted and controlled.<sup>16</sup> However, as suggested by Tim Edensor, an examination of how rurality is staged may help us to understand what kind of meanings of rural spaces, practices and identities are relevant to farm tourism entrepreneurs in the current situation and how they mediate those meanings for tourists (cf. Edensor 2006: 484). As my interest is in the producer's or director's point of view, I believe that observing entrepreneurs' principles of how to stage and how to perform experience-providing services sheds light on the theatrical complexity of the small-scale tourism/hospitality business.

Staging in small-scale enterprises, which are in the focus of this thesis, consists of composing scripts, working out role concepts and selecting other

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<sup>16</sup> A German sociologist Gerhard Schulze points to the distinction between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* in German, an issue often neglected in Anglo-American literature – not everything experienced in staged settings will be remembered or considered meaningful (Schulze 2005). A similar point is made by the Dutch peers of Pine and Gilmore, who stress the importance of “meaningful experiences” in the new economy, and consider it important to engage the customer as an active subject in experience creation (Boswijk et. al 2007). In the context of this dissertation it is necessary to add that the experience economy has been translated into Estonian as *elamusmajandus* and in Estonian one can likewise make a distinction between *kogemus* (*Erfahrung*, something perceived) and *elamus* (*Erlebnis*, a meaningful, unique or powerful experience).

relevant elements, material as well as immaterial, that are put into the performance/service.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, entrepreneurs who provide farm tourism services are not only *as* directors in the theatre, but they can also be viewed *as* scriptwriters, set designers, stage managers, and performers in one person. *Staging* a service is a selective process in which entrepreneurs as cultural agents choose amongst the existing cultural repertoire and social scripts – whether rural or non-rural – in order to create particular versions of rurality (e.g. idyllic, nostalgic, contradictory, etc.) for consumption. The principles behind selection are especially intriguing in the cases where farming is abandoned in the enterprise, while the rural setting is still considered important.

A *script* of the service/performance can be described as an outline or a narrative structure in which an entrepreneur creates meaningful connections between different scenes and situations. A script becomes activated in certain physical environments, in specific locations and through concrete actions (Taylor 2003: 29). Thus, scripts not only structure the stories told and dialogues performed, but also the non-verbal action and the setting of the performance (milieu and atmosphere). Scripts may likewise create “constellations between past, present, and future”, for instance various forms of enactment and display (Bærenholdt *et al.* 2008).

Every performance is spatially situated, involving either a physically or symbolically designed space, *a setting*, in which “both individual and group identities [...] are performed and thereby (re)produced” (Edensor 2006: 486). A setting consists of material and immaterial elements: objects, sounds, smells, lighting and the overall style; that may contribute to creating a certain atmosphere and facilitating the multi-sensory experiences of the participants (Taylor 2003: 29). Performances may transform everyday spaces of farmsteads and other rural surroundings into something that has been given more symbolic meaning through certain activities; particular settings, in turn, support the realisation of certain practices, making them coherent. As in theatre, the objects used in rural performances acquire the meaning of props that motivate action and work as mnemonic tools that create connections between actions, as well as between different times and locations.

One of the social scripts that may be debatable, yet still employed in most tourism and hospitality settings, is *the distinction between “front-stage” and “back-stage” regions* in tourism settings (Goffman 1959; MacCannell 1999).<sup>18</sup> This spatial as well as cognitive organisation works not only at the analytical level but likewise in everyday practice, shaping hosts and tourists performances. A front-stage/back-stage division enables to create and enact roles (also taking

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<sup>17</sup> Staging is a selective and value laden process which is related not only to individual choices and interpretations but is also related to production of culture at the macro-level. This is a topic of the concluding discussion (Chapter 6) in which I further explain how staging and performing in rural tourism is related to policies and discourses of the rural.

<sup>18</sup> Dean MacCannell actually defines six different stages of back and front regions in tourism (see MacCannell 1999: 101).

breaks), to keep a professional distance, to display something meaningful in the context of the performance whereas keeping other things out of the public view. Furthermore, choosing and designing a particular front or backstage area is often a matter related to the values of the business, the message an entrepreneur wants to communicate and the experience he or she aims to generate in customers. In the agritourism business, that combines production with tourism activities, the creation of a “pseudo-backstage” that is used for the hosts convenience, but sometimes also because of policy regulations (e.g. hygiene regulations for food production), there may be an increase in the aura of authenticity, enhancing the intimacy and immediacy of tourist-host encounters (Daugstad & Kirchengast 2013: 186). Blurring the distinction between the front and back regions is characteristic of many small family and lifestyle businesses, that are often based in owners’ homes, challenging the borders between private and public, intimate and shared, and making commercial homes hybrid spaces where relations between the setting and roles are more complex than in mono-functional spaces (Di Domenico & Lynch 2007).

As a stage director, an entrepreneur is usually aiming to achieve a certain meaningful coherence between different elements of the service/performance. This coherence may be subjectively defined and perceived (either from the producer’s or consumer’s point of view) but it undoubtedly also relates to certain socially shared representations of rurality and experiences in tourism (cf. Frisvoll 2013). Indeed, the coherence of the rural tourism service/performance cannot be assessed according to the same principles as a theatrical performance (cf. Pavis 1998: 59–61), yet there are some general features that a researcher of such phenomena could look at. For instance, how the setting, props or costumes relate to the performing of the role, does the script support the entrepreneur’s main intentions, are different elements of the service/performance redundant or complementary, incompatible or harmonious, etc. To sum up, the following questions may be formulated for the analysis of rural performances:

- What is the aim of the performance? To whom is it addressed?
- What scripts are staged performances of rural life based on?
- What roles are performed, by whom and how?
- How is rurality managed in the performance (what selections have been made among material and immaterial elements)?
- How much room for individual improvisation and reflection is the staging of the performance leaving?

There are different ways how to stage rurality that concern the cultural repertoire as well as the dominant aesthetics of the production (be it an idea, an atmosphere, a feeling or something else). Some rural tourism enterprises may aim to provide an experience of farm works or an encounter with farm animals, whereas the others may neglect the agriculture and husbandry and put stress on demonstrating traditional crafts or something not related to the rural setting or

local history at all (e.g. a high cuisine gourmet experience, a romantic night in the swimming pool). The very question of whether the enterprise is called a farm (“framing” of the service) and how the setting – buildings, architecture and surroundings – contribute to creating a (rural) tourism experience is crucial here. Scripts that rural tourism entrepreneurs rely on are both social scripts as well as particular scenarios for an activity or event. Some scripts leave more room for active engagement for all, whereas the others divide participants of the performance into performers and the audience. Indeed, no activity or service can be totally pre-scripted before it is enacted and many solutions need to be worked out in the process.<sup>19</sup> Especially in the small-scale rural tourism business, cultural improvisation and creativity have an important role in how services are staged and performed (see Brandth *et al.* 2010).

Performance perspective that gives importance to agency enables to view entrepreneurial activity as a realisation of not just individual or instrumentalised creativity but likewise of “cultural creativity” (Ingold & Hallam 2007; Liep 2001; Wagner 1981) that is improvisational, emergent and re-inventive rather than necessarily innovative, novel and inventive.<sup>20</sup> Attention on creativity in cultural theory as well as practice has brought into focus people as actors, as active agents in cultural production, and lifestyles as expressions of everyday aesthetics (Löfgren 2001: 73–78). Fredrik Barth considers the dialectic relationship between public and private meanings that helps to understand the dynamics of cultural creativity – cultural symbols may “resonate with deep personal significance and thereby give identity and direction to the subjects”; personal imagery in turn may become part of the shared cultural imagery (Barth 1987: 29). Thus, the cultural creativity of rural tourism entrepreneurs realised in staging and performing services for tourists can be an expression of their

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<sup>19</sup> Staging principles and scripts for rural tourism services are carried in the farmers’ minds and become concrete only during the actual performances or in recollections of the events. From the methodological viewpoint, articulation of those scripts in interviews or discussions provides entrepreneurs an opportunity to reflect more explicitly upon how they structure the events they perform for tourists.

<sup>20</sup> Creativity has been a popular concept in neoliberal economics since the early 1990s, especially related to urban settings. Managers, policymakers and planners have been convinced that “creative industries” (Hartley 2005) and the “creative class” (Florida 2002) are what gives cities or districts an attractive twist and helps boost their economy. Creative solutions are claimed to help revitalise, regenerate or even reinvent certain places. Such ideas are closely related to the culturalisation of economic practice, production of experiencescapes, aesthetisation of everyday places and practices, lifestyle and niche consumption, etc. However, in such discourses creativity is turned into something instrumental, there are particular middle-class consumerist values prioritised that reproduces social distinction and attention is turned towards large cities instead of other spaces where creativity may emerge (Edensor *et al.* 2010). As I already indicated in regard to commodification, instrumentalised creativity or creative construction of commodities and places may, as a consequence, lead to the destruction of existing practices, places and lives, because of prioritising the interests of one class or social group over others (Hartley *et al.* 2012: 51-55; Liep 2001: 5).

activity as cultural agents and likewise a manifestation of their identity (or some aspects of it).

Seeing parallels between creativity in small-scale rural businesses, improvisation and the work of theatre directors, I find it insightful to consider small-scale rural entrepreneurs as *cultural bricoleurs* who select, combine and interpret different cultural elements from the past (e.g. like traditions or heritage) as well as from the present (e.g. elements of certain lifestyles) in order to create new combinations and transformations of existing practices or forms (cf. Leeds-Hurwitz 1993; Liep 2001). As Claude Lévi-Strauss himself has stressed, the *bricoleur* “speaks not only with things (...) but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities.” Indeed, in the context of small-scale rural businesses cultural creativity cannot be overly idealised because entrepreneurs often need to act having limited resources at their disposal and therefore *bricolage* also means just “making do with whatever is at hand” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 17–21).

From a phenomenological point of view, staging and performing a service relates also to the issue of “experiential authenticity” that describes not so much tourism attractions and services but refers to how the entrepreneur (or entrepreneurial couple and their family members) relates the service with other activities, and how a service (or the whole tourism business) contributes to his or her identity and enables creative understanding of living (Di Domenico & Miller 2012).

### **2.2.3. Performing in small-scale rural tourism settings**

The individual’s or community’s creativity and role in the process of commodification as well as issues of self-commodification have received less attention in critical studies on commodification and tourism. As Harvey C. Perkins notes, alternative understanding of commodification<sup>21</sup> pays attention to social agency and treats the process of commodification as a negotiation between different actors “in particular places to meet particular situations and requirements and it therefore differs from place to place. Thus, methodologically it requires a situational approach that takes into account the particular history of a studied place and as a result, may help to observe the conscious construction of identities in connection with introducing new meanings to people’s lives through creating commodities (Perkins 2006: 247). Erik Cohen reminds us that:

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<sup>21</sup> Some authors use the term ‘commoditization’ in order to mark the difference from the neo-marxist interpretations of capitalist commodification.

“commoditization often hits a culture not when it is flourishing, but when it is actually already in decline, owing to the impingement of outside forces preceding tourism. Under such circumstances, the emergence of a tourist market frequently facilitates the preservation of a cultural tradition, which would otherwise perish. It enables bearers to maintain a meaningful local or ethnic identity which they might have otherwise lost.” (Cohen 1988:382)

If we want to understand the personal and creative dimension of commodification, that enables rural inhabitants to survive in the contemporary neoliberalist economy, then it leads to questions about how cultural practices, including forms of tourism entrepreneurship, may work as ways of re-interpreting personal as well as collective identities. In tourism, cultural commodification may be used strategically by people as a way of affirming or re-defining their identity, or telling their own story and communicating the significance of local cultural experiences (cf. MacDonald 1997). From the cultural point of view the process of self-commodification and self-marketing may lead to a more conscious construction of identities, introducing new meanings to people’s lives (cf. Perkins 2006: 247). Thus, small-scale rural entrepreneurs who are themselves inhabitants of the rural place and often perform in immediate interactions with tourists, have to reflect, at least to a certain degree, on a communicative dimension of the service (as performance) asking themselves: what am I selling?; to whom am I selling it?; how am I selling it?; and what is my role in this process? The question – what cannot be commodified? – addresses in this context also the dynamics between private – public, intimate – shared, and at its core – the question of the self.

Alexis Celeste Buntén suggests that a more nuanced analysis of self-commodification enables to see the complexity of connections between the tourism industry and practices of identity politics. Becoming involved in the tourism business may generate heightened awareness in community, and individuals alike, about their culture, its authenticity and traditions (especially in the context of indigenous cultures and their cross-cultural encounters). By constructing a commodified persona, the tourism worker can gain control over the product of his or her labour – the self – although this commodified persona may be created bearing in mind tourists’ expectations and therefore limiting the self-presentation using a certain selection from the cultural repertoire (Buntén 2008).

To develop further the issue of how self-commodification and authenticity construction are related in small-scale rural tourism I find that the concept of “performative authenticity”, proposed by Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade, sheds additional light on the issue. The authors stress that the concept not only “signifies that we do and perform places by our actions and behaviours, but that places are something we authenticate through our emotional/affective/sensuous relatedness to them” (Knudsen & Waade 2010:

12–13).<sup>22</sup> Therefore the “performative engagement” (Ingold & Hallam 2007: 3) of micro-entrepreneurs in small tourism settings is an essential part of their service – such engagements are based on personally meaningful memories and emotions, but also material objects that entrepreneurs consider meaningful. In addition, performative authenticity as well as engagement in small tourism businesses emerges from emotional involvement, mediation of the service through one’s bodily and emotional involvement (performing), integrating the roles one acts in everyday life (outside of the performance addressed to tourists) as part of the performance enacted to tourists, believing in the role one has created for touristic performances or hospitality services.

In modern service work “emotional labour” and “management of one’s feelings” (Hochschild 1983) has become an important part of the job, which means that the tourism worker’s emotions become commodified as part of the service. Relying on Goffman’s ideas of performing techniques, Arlie Hochschild has examined the commitment in the service job analysing how employees relate to the role they are performing for the customers distinguishing between “shallow acting” and “deep acting”<sup>23</sup> and brings up the issue of sincerity, which is closely related to the degree an employee believes in the role she or he is enacting. Emotional labour is about performing as much as it is about working – it requires time, effort and skills (Hochschild 1983). Such demand from the tourism workers’ part inevitably leads to commodification of one’s self, at least to an extent, and in particular a person’s appearance, embodied being, character, actions and expressions all become part of the service which means “the distinction between person and product is blurred” (cf. Brandth & Haugen 2006). The importance of emotional aspects and emotional involvement of the tourism worker is especially significant in small-scale enterprises, lifestyle businesses and commercial homes (such as rural tourism and hospitality businesses usually are) where the hosts usually directly interact with clients as service providers (Brandth & Haugen 2012). In these settings emotional labour is related to the performative skills of switching

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<sup>22</sup> For Britta Timm Kundsén and Anne Marit Waade the “performative authenticity” is not so much about the performance and the plays as such, they rather stress (relying on Judith Butler’s theory of performativity) that the performative provides a theoretical lens through which presentational realism and reflexivity are related to one another. They distinguish “empathetic understanding of the other through bodily performance” and “the affected body connecting the world” as two ways in which performative authenticity is realised (e.g. in various forms of participatory performances, for instance live re-enactments) (Knudsen & Waade 2010: 13–16).

<sup>23</sup> Hochschild makes this distinction based on the English and American acting schools. The latter has developed actor training based on Russian theatre director’s Constantin Stanislavski’s method, a set of techniques actors use to create in themselves the thoughts and feelings of their characters, so as to develop lifelike performance. In theatre practice there are various acting schools which have a different approach to how an actor relates to the character he/she creates on stage, yet, an engagement in performing is needed in all acting techniques (see Barba & Savarese 2005; Benedetti 2007).

between private and public, personally significant and professional roles while enacting the service.<sup>24</sup>

Small tourism and hospitality businesses are often family enterprises where husband and wife are usually partners, where family and business values cannot be divorced and emotional attachment associated with the place (often home of the family) guides the entrepreneur(s) to deliberately preserve the micro-size in all aspects of the business (Getz *et al.* 2004). Performing a service in such a setting can be emotionally demanding in many respects. “Personalised hospitality” (Bouquet 1987: 102) is an important characteristic of the small-scale rural tourism service, which concerns a particular individual, his or her charm and personal communication of culture (cf. Brandth & Haugen 2012; Nilsson 2002). Thereby small-scale rural tourism and family businesses often provide different experiences for tourists, in contrast to large enterprises targeted at the mass market, where the service may be perceived as more anonymous and homogenised. Meeting the owner or a member of the family business can create the feeling of intimacy, friendliness, trust (all results of emotional labour) and thereby increase the authentic experience that the service provides. From the producer’s perspective, especially in the context of lifestyle enterprises, personally enacted performances and the intimacy experienced in proximate interactions, shared stories and a homely atmosphere, etc. are not just of instrumental value for the entrepreneur but these qualities of the service indicate to the co-creation of such experiences (Andersson Cederholm & Hultman 2010: 25).

Successful performing of the service in the micro-scale tourism and hospitality business likewise means that an entrepreneur’s knowledge and skills are crucial for working out services and solutions, often with limited resources at hand. Skills that may contribute to the tourism or hospitality service I have in mind here are not so much related to business and marketing in a narrow sense, but to various competencies one may have (e.g. cooking; blacksmithing; and also previous experience in the service sector; teaching experience, etc.). Because small enterprises cannot have the same labour division and organisational script as in large companies, one person may be at the same time the director and the key actor who enacts different roles both in theatrical terms (e.g. being the scriptwriter, the designer, etc.) as well as in business or professional terms (e.g. the receptionist and the attendant; the chef and the waiter, etc.). Unlike professionals with a specialist education in tourism or hospitality, small-scale rural entrepreneurs are usually self-educated which may give them more opportunities to be creative interpreting a certain role and not to depend on an existing organisational script. Small entrepreneurs perform their

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<sup>24</sup> There are small-scale businesses and services therein in which the distinction between everyday roles and the role presented to the tourists may be clearly demarked using front-stage and back-stage regions and various acting devices – costume, the use of props, the way of speaking – making a clear distinction between back-stage and front-stage action.

services often based on personally meaningful criteria of professionalism or authenticity; that may differ from how service work is performed in large companies or tourism and hospitality businesses valuing standard professional training.

In addition to creating experiencescapes, the embodied and personal mediation of the experience services is a characteristic of small-scale tourism businesses. Personal mediation of a service may be realised in different types of performances (guiding clients to places or conducting workshops, or organising a community event involving tourists) in which a self-commodifying entrepreneur may take on the role of a “culture broker” (Bruner 2013). Part of creating emotionally engaging experiences in tourism is through storytelling that is often situated in a place related to the story and in a particular action (e.g. demonstrating farm works, food production or crafts). As in guided tours (for small groups) personal tales add extra value to the experience (see Bryon 2012).

Modern experiential tourism demands also ‘edutainment’, which means that amusement has an educational component (or vice versa) and the active engagement of tourists/clients is encouraged (e.g. trying a hand at blacksmithing). Performances that display materialities and practices of the agricultural past may also serve the dual function of educating and entertaining, especially the young generation and urban visitors. Edutaining performances can be a method of embodied consumption of rurality through physical, cognitive and emotional engagement and give participants a different experience than “the rural [tourist – E.B.] gaze” (see Abram 2003). A rural tourism entrepreneur may be a skillful expert or enthusiast guide who demonstrates to the tourists certain work and crafts that in the urbanised world may create nostalgic feeling of travelling to the past (Edensor 2006: 490). Although such enactments have a lot in common with open-air museums’ live re-enactments of the rural past, a tourism entrepreneur operating in a farm, for instance, may rely on more personalised interpretations.

## 3. THE ESTONIAN CONTEXT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL LIFE AND TOURISM

### 3.1. Changing rurality in Estonia from the 20th to 21st century

The development of rural life in Estonia can be contextualised more broadly in the history of Baltic countries that share similarities as well as differences (see Kasekamp 2010; Unwin *et al.* 2004). The transformations in Estonian national identity need to be considered in the context of complex historical political and economic changes, in which agrarian legacies and reforms have played a crucial part (Unwin 1998: 297–300). Analysing major rural policies in Estonia during the 20th century Monika Rauba (2002) distinguishes four major developments:

- the farming process in the 1920s and 1930s (family farm ideology)
- the destruction of farms in the 1940s by the Soviet Union (collective farm ideology)
- re-establishment of farms in the late 1980s and early 1990s (reconstruction of the family farm ideology)
- and the transforming of farms into enterprises since the late 1990s (introduction of the capitalist business ideology).

These major transitions indicate that the ‘farm’ (*tal* in Estonian), as a cultural phenomenon, once the key unit of production as well as the core symbol with which rural Estonians identified, has changed considerably throughout the last century and acquired a completely new meaning.<sup>25</sup> Family farm ideology has been abandoned and farms are now mainly dwelling places or sites for practicing varied forms of business, including tourism. In the following section I will give a short overview of the major transformations in Estonian rural culture, policies and ideologies focusing on topics such as: transitions in farm economy and agriculture, the evolution of rural entrepreneurship and changing rural identities.

#### 3.1.1. From establishment of family farm culture to collective farms

When the native Estonian majority lived in rural areas and serfs were connected to the land within a feudalistic society, the name used for them and by themselves was *maarahvas* (‘land-folk’) (see Beyer 2007). The historical self-image of Estonians is strongly rooted in rurality and the name *maarahvas* later

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<sup>25</sup> It is important to explain here that the Estonian word *tal* has different connotations from the English word ‘farm’. The latter has been appropriated by the Estonian language in the 1990s and refers to a larger production unit that might not necessarily be a family farm or a home for living. Of course, in addition to being a family home, the farm was also a production unit that covered most of the basic needs of peasant life.

acquired a more romantic meaning; as people who belonged to a place and were living in harmony with nature (see Jansen 2004). After the peasant law was introduced in 1856 it became possible for Estonian peasants to purchase their tenant holdings, although they still had limited property rights. From the 1860s peasants began buying farmsteads from the estates (using long-term bank loans) and ownership became the basis for a new identity. The emerging nationalist discourse related the issue of land ownership with national belonging and independence. Some values of that time have persisted until the present day, as the current minister of agriculture declares: “Historically speaking, farms have symbolised personal freedom, the liberty to make one’s own decisions and take responsibility, and not to be reduced to following orders. A farmer is the master of his own land (...).” (Seeder 2011: 7)

Since the beginning of the 1900s the idea of the modern farm and rural mentality began to develop during the overall process of modernisation in society. Next to critical realistic representations of rural life, the imagery of the idyllic farm can be found in Estonian literature, especially in poetry, and the lives of farm folk related to values such as honesty, sincerity, virtue and being a man of honour (Kangro & Uibopuu 1959: 40–41). After Estonia declared the independence, of the Republic in 1918, the Land Act was passed in 1919 that expropriated 96,6% of land properties that mainly belonged to the Baltic German gentry and distributed it among Estonians (Rauba 2002: 12). The radical re-distribution of land was unique at the time in all Europe and had at least two major local sociopolitical aims – to give the land as property to Estonians who, as rural agents, had been suppressed in the feudalistic society, and to silence the communist propaganda of the Soviet Union. As a result, two major social groups were formed – farmers and land-users (cottagers).

The Estonian Republic was mainly a country based on an agricultural economy in which small family farms were the key units of production.

“There were a total of 139,984 farms in Estonia based on the 1939 Agricultural Census. The majority of these, i.e. 62% were small farms (less than 20 ha), 18% were standard farms (20–30 ha), 15% were full farms (30–50 ha) and 5% were large farms (more than 50 ha). There were more than 495,000 people engaged in farm work in 1939. 87% of them were family labour force. Together with holders’ family members that were not working on the farm, the total farm population was 625,500 persons, or 59% of the population of Estonia.” (Agricultural Census 2010: 74)

Estonian farmers identified themselves with their farmstead and the concept of home was likewise closely related to the farm as a place and to the extended farm family. Furthermore, home comprised of more than just family and farmhouses, it embraced the whole living environment – properties of the farm (fields, forests) but likewise the surrounding village (Jürgenson 2004). The family farm and farm-life became ideal values in private as well as public self-representations, for instance in the national imagery of the time. Though, as

Juhan Kahk describes, while the Land Act solved some social problems in the countryside and Estonian agriculture developed remarkably in the 1920s to 1940s, small-plot holders remained relatively poor and the need for cooperation in agricultural production was recognised in order to be more profitable. In the late 1930s both farmers as well as politicians agreed that the future of agricultural production belonged to bigger mechanised farms (Kahk 1994: 43–45).

After Estonia became part of the Soviet Union from 1944 the land was nationalised and maintained by the state. From 1947 onward, the collectivisation of agriculture destroyed the traditional family farm system and collective farms (*kolkhozes*) and state owned farms (*sovkhoses*) became established (Kasekamp 2010: 145–46).<sup>26</sup> Living standards in collective farms varied considerably depending on whether the farm was supported by the authorities or not; the overall produce decreased in comparison with the pre-war period, and agricultural producers had to sell their products below production costs (Klesment 2009). Food shortages were a common part of everyday life in Soviet Estonia even in the 1960s and 1970s (Raun 2001: 198–203). In the shortage economy, both rural and urban inhabitants had to look for additional resources, especially concerning food. People created supplemental food sources, such as subsidiary farms and garden plots, especially from the 1940s to the early 1960s, when collective farms did not pay monetary wages (see Järvesoo 1974). Although workers in collective farms did not own the land, the way it was used for private production shared many similarities with the peasant self-sufficiency economy; therefore working in private plots (standard size as a rule 0,6 ha) was also partly a manifestation of cultural continuity although in different socio-economical conditions from the pre-war republic (cf. Rauba 2001). The shortage economy that influenced private production and consumption habits also created social solidarity among rural and urban inhabitants and alternative social networks (Annist 2014; Jõesalu 2006).

Rapid industrialisation guided by the state and hard living conditions in the countryside, especially during the building up of collective farms, induced migration of the rural population to urban settings for better job opportunities and living conditions. The rural population started to decrease steadily from the 1950s. (By 1989 only 28% of the Estonian population were living in rural areas, with just 12% involved in agriculture (Rauba 2002: 15).) Meanwhile, the living environment and people's homes in rural areas changed as well, especially after apartment houses were established in central villages (Annist 2011). In the Soviet era it was common that the older generation lived in the farmhouse and the younger generation moved either to the newly built apartment blocks in the *kolkhoz* centre or to towns and cities, yet, the farmhouse was still considered a symbol of home and was frequently visited by children in order to help their

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<sup>26</sup> Some light industries also existed in the countryside but the industry was mainly focused in cities and towns.

parents in the household (Grubbström & Sooväli 2012: 332). Although emotional ties between farms and farm landscapes were partly destroyed by the Soviet system people managed to adapt to the new demands and families' rural households were still an important part of Estonians' self-representations. Alternatively working in the garden plots helped to maintain the feeling of belonging to the land. Nostalgic longing for the farms and farm-life was especially strong among those Estonians who had emigrated during the Second World War and lived in exile (see Kangro & Uibopuu 1959).

### **3.1.2. Post-Soviet situation: reforms, family farms and small-scale entrepreneurship in the countryside**

In the post-socialist situation, Estonia along with other countries in Central and Eastern Europe had undergone a substantial transformation in social life, economics, culture, landscapes, etc. The transition from socialist/collectivist to capitalist economy was implemented through land reforms as well as agricultural reforms that implemented the de-collectivisation, privatisation, and restitution of the land. Although rural development took different paths in different post-socialist countries, a common thread was a sharp decline in production, high rates of unemployment, continuous migration to the cities and towns, and an aging population (Alanen 2004; Hann 2003; Horáková & Boscoboinik 2012; Unwin *et al.* 2004). De-collectivisation, the reorganisation of production and properties in rural areas brought significant changes to rural Estonians' lives, including changes in their identity and self-image (Alanen *et al.* 2001; Annist 2011; Rausing 2004).

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the de-collectivising of the rural economy meant that Estonian rural society along with others in the Eastern Bloc had to transform and adapt to the new rules of a capitalist economy. The Farm Act was accepted already in the Soviet Estonia in 1989 before the official re-establishment of the Republic and was followed by several agrarian reforms and other legislations in post-Soviet Estonia in the 1990s focused on restructuring the Soviet system and the redistribution of rural resources (see Raagma *et al.* 2009). In 1989 the Farm Act legalised private farms as production units and the 1992 agricultural reform dissolved or reorganised the kolkhozes and sovkhoses. This resulted in the emergence of a new social class – farmers. In politics and the media of the late 1980s and early 1990s the farm, farm life and rural areas represented historical symbols of Estonianness – the lost paradise – and the personal motives for re-establishing family farms were often related to nostalgic feelings (Rauba 2000; Rauba 2002). The restitution policy aimed to re-establish the pre-war agrarian structure and became a neo-romanticist project of the national identity that idealised the peasant culture before the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately Estonia did not consider the problems Western small-scale farmers had faced in Europe during the second half of the 20th century (Granberg 2004: 176).

Farms were restored to their legal heirs, who were not necessarily interested in continuing with agriculture. As a result some farms were resold, some remained empty with the lands uncultivated. Such a policy fostered feelings of injustice, with conflicts between new property owners and active agriculturalists living in the countryside (see Alanen *et al.* 2001).

Due to the radical reforms and restructuring, rural changes relating to the decrease of the agricultural sector happened faster in Estonia than in Western Europe (Abrahams 1996). Large areas of rural agricultural landscape characterising Soviet Estonia became scrub or woodland – this change was not purely physical, it also had a cultural meaning, as landmarks of the collective rural economy did not disappear (Palang 2010; Unwin *et al.* 2004). In the public discourse terms like “winners” and “losers” became common, the former signifying those who successfully passed the transition and established rural enterprises and the latter for those who did not manage to find employment and re-define their identity in the new neoliberal economic situation (Annist 2011; Rauba 2001). The problems of high unemployment in rural areas remained. Small family farms could not achieve a stable position in the free market due to the lack of state protection (e.g. customs and import restrictions), additionally overproduction in Europe kept prices low (Alanen 1995: 15).

If in the early 1990s the state policy supported the nostalgic restoration of the traditional farm, then in the second half of the decade small farms were seen as unprofitable in a new free market situation; contemporary large farms as specialised production units using modern technology became the new agenda (Rauba 2001: 86). The legal status of farms and farmers was spelled out ambivalently and in the 1990s the term ‘farmer’ (*talunik*) slowly disappeared from official discourse. The farmer became an entrepreneur who could choose from different types of businesses (e.g. self-employed entrepreneur, sole proprietor, limited-liability company) not necessarily dealing with agricultural production (e.g. tourism and services) (Rauba 2001: 82). The social background of the new rural entrepreneurs was varied. Some of them had previously worked in collective farms and had better access to resources (e.g. machinery) as well as the knowledge and skills in farming, whereas others were from outside the agricultural sector, including urbanities, who often had a rather idealised vision about farm life and production based on collective memory and narratives. Many new farmers started with enthusiasm but had to face several difficulties beginning with the lack of capital, production technologies, and limited possibilities to sell their produce. By the end of 1990s the enthusiasm for going back to farms cooled – new farmers had to face high inflation, competition from imported goods, the absence of former input sources and output purchasers, and the withdrawal of subsidies (Unwin *et al.* 2004: 124). Therefore many gave up farming or started looking for alternative entrepreneurial activities in the countryside.

The situation in the Estonian agricultural sector started to recover in the 2000s through subsidies from the SAPARD programme and the joining of the

European Union in 2004, that opened the market (including foreign investments) and improved the chances to get additional subsidies for different rural enterprises and activities (e.g. the LEADER programme). However, the EU support programmes and local policies for agriculture favoured the large scale operations rather than small farms (Rauba 2002; Unwin 2004). The impact of transnational market developments and policies is reflected also in the recent agricultural census – the number of agricultural holdings<sup>28</sup> in Estonia in 2010 was 19 613 and the total share of agriculture in the production of the GDP in 2005–2011 2–3% (Lemetti *et al.* 2012). Many agricultural holdings have ceased their agricultural activity completely or their land use has fallen below one hectare. The units that have decreased are mainly small holdings (agricultural area less than 10 ha) although their percentage is still high in the total (72% of holdings have less than 20 ha of land), whereas the number of large holdings (agricultural area at least 100 ha) has increased – 73 % of the total utilised land belongs to large holdings.<sup>29</sup>

As the census reports show, a decrease in the number of rural holdings has been a consistent trend across Europe already since the 1970s, but in the last seven years the decrease in the number of holdings in Estonia has been 47% which according to the Eurostat is the largest decrease in the EU (Agricultural Census 2010: 77). At the same time, similar to rural areas in Europe, Estonian farms have become increasingly more diversified, as the result of the changing market situation, transnational and national policies, among other factors. Overall 534 of agricultural holdings have more than one non-agricultural activity, 317 holdings or 12% are engaged in tourism activities (Agricultural Census 2010: 90). The Estonian rural development report from 2011 similarly states that the service economy continues to evolve and specific rural services include farm tourism and nature tourism, and the use of rural landscapes is becoming increasingly more diverse due to these services that are addressed to urban visitors (Värnik *et al.* 2011: 18).

A recent book, *Eripalgeline Eesti talu* (Multifaceted Estonian Farm) published by the Estonian Farmers' Federation (EFF) has somewhat conflicting introductory texts that reflect the different values and ideologies which exist in various discourses. – The director of the EFF describes the family farm as a symbol of cultural continuity and national heritage, the source of

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<sup>28</sup> 'Agricultural holding' is defined as "a unit where there is at least one hectare of utilised agricultural area or where agricultural products are produced mainly for sale." (Agricultural Census 2010: 95)

<sup>29</sup> Although the rurality in Estonia has been rapidly changing, certain values related to rural environment and life are persistent in the collective memory. In 2006, 48% of the respondents in a poll studying Estonians' attitudes towards rural life stated that "the farm is an economic unit of a family that is involved in agricultural production" and 38 % of urban inhabitants expressed that they would prefer living in the countryside, triggered mainly by emotional reasons (e.g. tranquility, nature, clean air, privacy, security, etc.) (Eesti elanike hoiakud 2006: 68-69).

entrepreneurial activities and a sustainable and ecological way of production, expressing scepticism towards the increasing growth of large agricultural enterprises which value first and foremost efficiency and production (Nurm 2011: 10–11). The Estonian minister of agriculture, in turn, argues that agriculture is no longer the only possible activity for making a living in the countryside and praises the kaleidoscopic diversity of farm types in contemporary Estonia (Seeder 2011: 7). The book includes examples of a tourism farm, an energy farm and a nature farm. From my own observations the list can be continued with a hunting farm, a spiritual farm, a theatre farm, a gastronomic farm, a sauna farm, etc. Such examples point to rural entrepreneurs creativity in coming up with new ideas of how to find activities that will help them to sustain themselves in the countryside. Additionally such enterprises are indicative of the increasing heterogeneity of lifestyles and consumption niches where farms in rural settings serve as stages for performing multiple leisure activities or alternative services. Furthermore, as a reaction to standardised products and services, supermarket domination and big corporations, there is a trend to re-discover that small is beautiful (this especially concerns food culture).

Often the establishers of new rural enterprises are former urbanites who may or may not have roots in the countryside. They can be characterised as lifestyle migrants who decided to move to the countryside for a better quality of life (nature, privacy, tranquillity, etc.) and either keep their urban jobs or establish a new enterprise closely related to their personal values, skills and preferences (cf. Woods 2011). Such development has likewise been supported by the improvement of information technologies and by increasingly mobile lifestyles. The main motivation for starting such enterprises is not economic growth or large profit. Several new forms of rural entrepreneurship can be characterised as lifestyle businesses – the main motivation of those entrepreneurs is to enjoy certain qualities of life a rural setting can offer, and to deal with activities that they can likewise commodify for their clients. Indeed, the enterprise should bring sufficient income in order afford living. Counter-urbanisation or in-migration from urban settlements has brought to rural regions people with higher education, often with previous experience in some form of entrepreneurship. Many of the recently established rural enterprises are dealing with tourism and/or hospitality services merging elements of local cultural traditions, and creating combinations of the old and the new elements in their business, or inventing services that are novel to the countryside. Through such lifestyle enterprises, rural lives and services become increasingly more varied and the distinction between rural/urban more blurred.

There are several problems related to small-scale entrepreneurship in general, and rural small-scale entrepreneurship in particular in Estonia. Some of these issues are regarding global and European trends, but here I mention just some local developments that help to contextualise rural tourism micro-

businesses.<sup>30</sup> More than 40% of the 100 000 economically active entrepreneurs in Estonia are located in Tallinn, the capital, and only a third in rural areas (Gorban 2011: 45). These numbers give a rough idea of the urban-rural proportions in the Estonian entrepreneurial landscape, although the concentration of businesses in the centre does not necessarily mean a decrease in rural small-scale businesses.<sup>31</sup> Yet, the centralisation and non-sustainable regional policies are seen as the major shortcomings in the development of small rural enterprises. In policy documents diversification of rural entrepreneurship as a way to survive is still promoted:

“Diversification is a good opportunity for an agricultural holding to increase the competitiveness of the holding, reduce risks and create additional income. In rural areas, diversification is supported by natural resources and cultural heritage and entrepreneurs should make better use of these competitive advantages. Taking into consideration the global trends of consumption and changes in the behaviour of people and an increasing demand for food, it is evident that agriculture, as well as other areas based on the sustainable use of natural resources and value added eco-friendly products and networking in these areas, has a future. Also, it is important to mobilise the available knowledge and competence and make use of the competitive advantage of each region.” (Gorban 2012: 69)

However, the quote also demonstrates how the logic of competitiveness as part of the neoliberal economy has been accepted in Estonian public discourses. Diversification alone is not solving the problems related to the rural economy and small-scale entrepreneurs need to face various challenges today. Unlike in several other European countries the taxes from enterprises are not collected and valued by the local municipality but by the state. The taxation system does not motivate municipalities to support local entrepreneurship because the income taxes are collected according to the place of residence, not according to the location of employment (Udras 2013). The state provides entrepreneurs the

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<sup>30</sup> See the analysis of small business development in post-soviet Estonia in the context of transitional economies in former Soviet republics in Smallbone & Welter 2010 and Smallbone & Welter 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Recent studies demonstrate that the last economic crisis (2008–2009) had various influences on rural entrepreneurship including a decrease in sales and reduced chances to obtain loans, at the same time the number of micro-enterprises increased from 80,4% in 2005 to 90,2% in 2010; important problems raised by rural entrepreneurs were the need to improve infrastructure (especially roads) and public services in rural areas and the lack of qualified labour (related to structural unemployment – E.B.) (Värnik *et al.* 2012). 50% of small and medium size enterprises today are micro-enterprises (1–9 employees), a considerable number are registered as self-employed entrepreneurs and define themselves as family enterprises; a recent trend in 2005–2010 has been to move from an urban to a rural setting (Kaarna *et al.* 2012: 75).

start-up support but the sustainability of the micro-enterprises is to the greater extent their own problem.<sup>32</sup>

According to the Rural Development Plan for 2007–2013, supporting diversified rural entrepreneurship was an important issue in policy, and special attention was paid to subsidies for micro-enterprises involved in tourism and hospitality. Nevertheless, the diversification propagated in the EU and local rural policies does not necessarily bring solutions to the Estonian rural peripheries. Lisa Herslund notes on the Baltic States: “Rural diversification was expected to alleviate poverty, but diversification is not always an “upward” adaptation. The population and activities are more diverse but an increasing inequality between people can be observed. Certain individual skills and assets have been necessary to possess in order to find employment and to start a business.” (Herslund 2007: 58)

Not all rural inhabitants may have the economic as well as social capital needed for providing tourism and hospitality services, besides, rural tourism enterprises (e.g. tourism farms) are mostly micro-scale in which self-employment is a strategy to sustain a living, and therefore they do not solve the problem of rural unemployment. A bigger issue concerning challenges for the “entrepreneurial spirit” or “entrepreneurial selves” in rural Estonia throughout the 2000s is addressed by Aet Annist who argues, relying on her fieldwork in south-eastern villages, that the neoliberal policies have facilitated the loss of solidarity and created a disengagement in rural communities. She claims that the entrepreneurial spirit that characterised the older generation who spent their vital years in the Soviet Estonia has been lost due to the lack of supporting social and infrastructural features. As the result rural communities in Estonia have become more fragmented, the social networks weakened and many entrepreneurs detached from the rest of the local population (Annist 2014).

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In comparison with Western European countries, the Estonian countryside quite recently was considered a place of production and therefore Estonians may hold less idyllic and pastoral images of rurality. Farm landscapes are a symbol of pride and independence, but also hard work. However, rural values played an important role in Estonians’ self-representations, in the discourses, narratives and imagery of national identity until the early 1990s. It has only been since the last decade of the previous century that rural life and rural people have acquired a somewhat retrograde position in society, and Estonianness came more to be related to urban and capitalist free market values (Annist 2014; Unwin 1998). Thus, the concept of the farm that was once a key symbol of Estonians’ identity

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<sup>32</sup> The number of dissolved micro-enterprises in rural regions has been high since the beginning of the 2000s, a considerable number of these were involved in agriculture (Värnik *et al.* 2006).

does not carry the same meaning today because of the changing policies, legislations, and actual rural practices in the countryside.

The *Rural Development Report* from 2011 summarised the major structural transitions in Estonian rurality during the last 20 years admitting that the meaning of the concepts of ‘rural’, ‘rural life’ and ‘rural entrepreneur’ have changed considerably along with other major social changes in the society in Europe and in the global economy and politics. The major structural transformations in contemporary Estonian rurality are related to similar changes in European rural areas – industrialisation of agriculture and the establishment of large production units, the migration of urbanities to rural areas for a better living environment and privacy, and the increasing importance of the service sector, especially related to recreation and leisure (Värnik *et al.* 2011). The report agrees with the claims made in international rural studies that the lifestyle and ways of spending spare time are also increasingly shaping Estonian rural identities and people’s consumption choices (cf. Perkins 2006). Thus, values related to rural life are closely related to the values that the current society is praising. Rural places, lives and identities in Estonia have become increasingly more varied and hybrid and the developments in rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship reflect only some facets of this hybridity.

### **3.2. Rural leisure and tourism in Estonia: The past and the present**

In the following section I provide a brief overview of how rural tourism emerged and evolved in Estonia in order to add local details to the broader European context introduced in the introductory chapter. Among other topics I will highlight how the farm became a place for rural leisure activities and what are the historical as well as current socio-cultural values related to this development.

#### **3.2.1. The emergence of rural leisure in 1920s–1930s and further development in Soviet Estonia**

In the 19th century the Baltic Sea region was a well-known tourist destination among the German and Russian gentry and several seaside resorts were established alongside the Estonian coastline (see Brüggeman 2011). However, Estonians were still mostly rural people and the idea of the countryside as a leisurely or aesthetically pleasing place (e.g. depicted by Baltic German artists) was not common except as a form of everyday leisurely practices.

The emergence of rural tourism in Estonia may be dated back to the 1920s and 1930s when the society began modernising, working hours of urban labourers were shortened and people started getting paid for vacations. Vacationing was seasonal, as in the Nordic countries. The Estonian word

*suvitama* literally means ‘to have a summer holiday’. However, for urbanities spending summer holidays in the countryside often meant helping parents or relatives with rural work, not just leisure for fun (sightseeing, sunbathing, etc.) (Järs 2000). At the same time, it was in between the two world wars when certain hamlets or small towns situated in scenic surroundings became places for second homes and vacationing changed, through seasonal consumption patterns, and former life in these settlements changed considerably (Koppel 2013). Yet, owning a second home was affordable mainly to the wealthier middle class families.

Organised domestic tourism was still in its infancy, because travelling for leisure was a new concept for the recently modernised nation.<sup>33</sup> In 1920 the Estonian Tourism Society (*Eesti Turismi Ühing*) was established based on a civic initiative. One of the main aims of the organisation was to advertise domestic travelling. The tourism materials of the time promoted homeland tourism as a form of national education as well as tourism for health purposes. In the imagery of the brochures and advertisements, rural landscapes and folk heritage had a significant importance. The development of public transport made holiday destinations accessible to the wider public. Since the mid 1930s sightseeing tours were organised by bus, there were also special trains bringing tourists to the desired destinations. In 1930 the ministry of roads constituted the foundation of State Tourism Management (*Turismi Keskkorraldus*) that together with the Estonian Tourism Society aimed to create affordable places of accommodation – “tourists’ homes” (*turistide kodud*) all over the country.

Although the majority of the Estonian population in the 1930s was still rural, there was a number of urban dwellers who looked for opportunities to spend their summer holidays in the countryside. An example of the national ideology of the time was published in the magazine *Taluperenaine* (“Farmwife”) in 1934 – an anonymous letter entitled “*Suvitus tallu!*” (“Holidays to farms!”) by a “family man” from Tallinn. The correspondent (probably a domestic tourism promoter) stresses the importance of the farm as an ideal place for family vacations and contrasts it with noisy seaside resorts. He highlights the peace and silence of the farm milieu and the opportunity to educate urban children about rural life, especially concerning food production. The letter points out that mainly the relatives and friends of the family can be found amongst

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<sup>33</sup> Compilers of a tourist brochure from the 1920s consider it necessary to explain the concept of the tourist and tourism to Estonian urban travellers in the following way: “The word *touriste* originates from the French language where it originally meant a person who is traveling in beautiful landscapes. (...) In our [domestic – E.B.] conditions a longer time meant for a holiday can likewise be spent rambling around, enjoying the beauty of nature, tempering one’s body and spirit with fresh air and varied experiences. An opportunity to broaden one’s mind getting to know the country, the people and local specialities is comforting also for a contemporary practical man. Thus, the word ‘tourist’ could be translated to our native language not as a pleasure traveller but as a curious traveller (in Estonian *huvirändaja*)” (Kask 1923: 5).

holidaymakers, whereas there are several townspeople who have no country hosts to visit. The author suggests, taking Finnish farms as an example, renting out a room and providing guests with food in the summer season as a chance for earning extra income and as a future project to establish a holiday cottage for rental (Taluperenaine 1934: 131). This letter describes the basic elements and values of farm-based tourism and reveals that it was an emerging practice. The ideal of spending a vacation on a farm was closely connected to ideals related to national culture and identity of the time.

After the Second World War when Estonia was incorporated as part of the Soviet Union, private properties were nationalised and access to foreign countries restricted. Estonians could travel mainly to other Soviet republics and in the Eastern Block (although access to the latter was also limited). Since the end of the 1950s, in addition to sanatoriums new types of resorts – ‘holiday homes’ (in Estonian *puhkekodu*) – owned by the state, industrial enterprises or collective farms, were established along the coastline and on islands where workers could rest for special vacation vouchers. Domestic tourism remained the most important form of recreation and the notion of ‘tourism’ involved mostly hiking, excursions or holidaying in state owned institutions (Järs 2007). However, there was also a form of non-official domestic rural tourism that is colourfully depicted in a nationally beloved comedy film *Siin me oleme!* (“Holidaymakers”, 1978), whose events are located on Muhu island, a popular tourism destination among Estonians. The film creates an ironic image of snobbish urban tourists from Tallinn who have unrealistic expectations about a holiday in the countryside – they want comfort and peace but in reality need to face everyday life on the farm, including farm animals. Although exaggerated “Holidaymakers” gives an idea of “farm tourism” in the Soviet Estonia in which urbanities made an unofficial bargain with hosts who agreed to accommodate them at their home.

During the 1960s and 1970s, a rapid urbanisation and improvement in living standards took place, and many urban dwellers established second homes for leisure purposes as well as for a subsidiary economy. Due to the war, the mass deportations and in-migration to towns, numerous rural houses were abandoned. It was cheaper to adapt an old farmhouse than to build a new cottage, besides, farms were located far from each other providing privacy. “Transformation into summer cottages saved many farms from ruin, such a lifestyle helped to preserve the traditional Estonian landscape and to prevent the endless extension of the large fields of the kolkhozes and sovkhoses. It can be said that adapting an old farmhouse into a summer cottage was also an aesthetic expression of the national-patriotic mindset.” (Kalm 2002: 173) This way second homes established in former farmhouses came to represent a link with places of childhood and family origin. For many urban people in Soviet Estonia, as in other countries of the Soviet Bloc, summer cottages were places of the ‘dacha economy’, for practicing household agriculture as a considerable survival strategy in a society in which there was a constant deficiency of food products

(cf. Smith & Stenning 2006). Summer holidays in the countryside at the grandparents' home (farmsteads) are still vivid in the memories of several post-war generations of Estonians as signs of cultural continuity (Jaagus 2010).

### **3.2.2. Rural tourism since the 1990s: The emergence of farm tourism enterprises**

Since the 1990s tourism has come to be seen as a creative solution to post-communist rural areas. The governments started promoting tourism related entrepreneurship and activities as a means of diversifying the rural economy and generating new forms of employment with a relatively low cost (see Horáková & Boscoboinik 2012). With a short history in rural tourism Estonia had to face the demands and requirements of the international tourism industry. The collective farm system had collapsed, yet the soviet heritage was (and is) still present in rural landscapes. People who started with rural tourism lacked experience both in entrepreneurship as well as in hospitality (especially concerning Western standards). Several institutions, organisations and initiatives were established in Estonia in order to stimulate and support the establishment of tourism enterprises, to provide information and training for entrepreneurs without previous working experience in the tourism sector, and to facilitate networking between small entrepreneurs. Considerable financial support for developing rural tourism in Estonia has come from European Union funds and programmes. In public documents and materials rural tourism is defined relying on international definitions. For example, an Estonian handbook on rural tourism defines it as “the economical activity involving tourism that is situated in the rural region, is based on local resources and considers their sustainability” (Ardel 2004: 15).

The number of rural inhabitants in Estonia relying increasingly on their income from tourism – usually starting with offering accommodation in working farms and moving on to rather varied tourism products – rose gradually during the second half of the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s (Alanen 2004; Ardel 2004; cf. similar developments in central and Eastern Europe in Bojnec 2004 and in Western European countries in Busby & Rendle 2000). Providing tourism and hospitality services became a source of livelihood or in some cases the core business for rural households, that searched for new ways to make a living in the countryside where employment opportunities were scarce. This process from tourism in farms to tourism farms is reflected also in institutional developments.

Tiina Ardel refers to the role of three organisations that took the initiative for developing Estonian rural tourism since the 1990s: the Estonian Farmers Federation (the department of rural tourism was established in 1992), a civil movement *Kodukant* (was established in 1997), Estonian Ecotourism Association (was established in 1996), and several regional networks. At state level the advancement of rural tourism was discussed but no substantial

governmental subsidies were given for the developing enterprises. With the European Union support through the PHARE programme, projects were initiated for developing rural tourism. An NGO Estonian Rural Tourism (*Eesti Maaturism*) was established in 2000 that supports its members providing training, information, product development and marketing services. In the 1990s Estonian rural tourism entrepreneurs were motivated by economical interests but lacked training or experience in hospitality, the dominant services were related to accommodation (Bed & Breakfast), there were a lot of identical services and settings with little specialization. (Ardel 2004: 45–46)

In the 2000s rural tourism services have become more diversified and enterprises more specialised. Today the Estonian Rural Tourism Association unites 292 rural tourism service providers (approximately 45% of them are accommodation providers, but the exact number of farm tourism enterprises is not clear due to the lack of specific statistics; not all rural tourism entrepreneurs are members of the organisation). On the website of the organisation, rural tourism possibilities in Estonia are described in four major categories: different forms of accommodation (B&B lodging, holiday villages, guest housing, etc.); active tourism and recreation (hiking, canoeing, boat trips, horseback riding, nature tours, snowshoeing, ATV safaris, hunting, fishing, etc.); catering and seminar services. There are also services that are categorised as “experience tourism”.<sup>34</sup> Considering the decrease in rural households, it is characteristic that the development plans for Estonian rural tourism for 2004–2007 and 2010–2014 do not stress the potential of agricultural activities as considerable attractions.<sup>35</sup> Instead, the importance of nature, history and regional cultural heritage are brought out as valuable resources for rural tourism experiences. It is also stated in these documents that rural entrepreneurs should be more oriented towards providing elaborated experiences and educational workshops for the visitors to rural regions.

A recent survey, ordered by the Ministry of Agriculture, about the rural tourism situation gives additional information about the consumers. The survey states that domestic tourism in Estonia is significant (residents of Estonia take 63% of their travels within their homeland), yet the purpose of most trips to rural areas is to visit relatives/acquaintances or one’s summer cottage; spending a holiday in a rural tourism establishment is the least popular reason.<sup>36</sup> Considering this, the survey suggests that rural tourism entrepreneurs should provide more products and services that have an additional value. The proportion of foreign tourists who have visited rural tourism enterprises has

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<sup>34</sup> Source: Eesti Maaturism [Estonian Rural Tourism Association].  
Online: [www.maaturism.ee](http://www.maaturism.ee) Accessed: 10.10.2013.

<sup>35</sup> Source: Eesti Maaturism [Estonian Rural Tourism Association].  
Online: [www.maaturism.ee](http://www.maaturism.ee) Accessed: 10.10.2013.

<sup>36</sup> 51% of Estonian domestic tourists stay at their second homes, 33% at their acquaintances or friends place; only 9% of respondents spend their holiday at a rural tourism enterprise. (Hillep *et al.* 2012)

been 18%, thus, most of the rural tourists who consume the services are of Estonian origin.<sup>37</sup> (The dominance of domestic tourists in rural tourism enterprises is also characteristic of other European countries.) For many urban tourists, nostalgic feelings towards the countryside and looking for their “roots” are mentioned as important motives for rural leisure and tourism. Although cultural heritage is seen as an important resource for rural tourism the survey brings out that the entrepreneurs are not aware of all the potential of the local heritage (including food heritage) for experience based services and there is little knowledge about the potential clients searching for it – most of the rural tourism entrepreneurs rely on what they have, what is interesting for themselves and they do not study the demands of the market (Hillep *et al.* 2012). These domestic particularities of Estonian rural tourism are important to consider when thinking about how and to whom are rural tourism performances staged.

Thus, heritage as well as nature are commodified as tourism resources, especially in the context of experience services, that are targeted to urban dwellers. These developments are in tune with similar trends in other European countries as I described in the Introduction. Although the policies and market developments are increasingly encouraging a more targeted, normativised and managed production of services, I would like to stress that the personality and creativity of an entrepreneur is still the important trigger that makes rural tourism and hospitality services unique and memorable.

### **3.2.3. Some aspects of the farm tourism phenomenon in Estonia**

In concluding this chapter I would come back to the changing meaning of ‘farm’ in Estonian rural culture, focusing on the phenomenon called *turismitalu* (‘tourism farm’) – an equivalent of a rural tourism enterprise in Estonia – and its local peculiarities. Farm based tourism has a long tradition in several European countries, especially in Italy, Germany and Austria. As I mentioned in the introduction, definitions of ‘rural’, ‘farm’ and ‘tourism’ are highly debatable in the current situation and their meaning is rapidly changing. Thus, ‘farm tourism’ remains diversely defined due to the heterogeneous development of the practice itself (the vast range of activities that can be related to it), as well as the differences between policies and requirements in different countries (see Busby & Rendle 2000; Phillip *et al.* 2010).<sup>38</sup>

Although in Europe “farm holidays/agritourism is normally rural tourism that involves staying on a working farm or, for day visitors, making farm visits” (Lane 2009: 356), the situation is quite different in Estonia where farm tourism

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<sup>37</sup> The majority of whom come from neighbouring countries (Finland, Latvia, Russia).

<sup>38</sup> The rough distinction can be made between (1) farm-based tourism, holiday farms or agritourism (which includes farm holidays on a working farm where tourism is a supplemental activity) and (2) farm tourism enterprises specialising solely in tourism (these farms provide accommodation, catering and usually some other services that are related to recreation and/or experience tourism in rural areas) (see Roberts & Hall, 2001).

has little or almost no working farm elements involved in the enterprises.<sup>39</sup> Yet, pluriactivity is common, as in other countries, because farm tourism is usually a small-scale enterprise and highly seasonal. What the enterprises are offering may be called the experience of rurality in the broader sense and entrepreneurs' individual interpretations of it in the narrower sense. Thus, the ambivalent term 'tourism farm' used in Estonia is related to the specificity of the local practice, which is rarely connected with agricultural activities.

The attractions and services available on tourism farms, in addition to accommodation and serving meals, vary from recreational activities (canoeing, cycling, snowshoeing, horseback riding, sleigh rides, fishing, hunting, guided hikes, taking a sauna, etc.) to opportunities to try traditional rural work and crafts (hay-making, gathering medicinal herbs, smoking meat or fish, weaving on looms, carpentry, blacksmithing, etc.). In addition to tourism farms, other kind of rural enterprises may be found in the Estonian countryside that do not provide accommodation but services related to hospitality (e.g. dining, taking a smoke sauna) or edutainment (e.g. workshops on various crafts). Rural tourism "taskscape" (Ingold & Kurttila 2000) in Estonia may involve traditional as well as novel activities and performances (demonstrations of crafts, village fairs, theme parks, etc.) (see Vösu & Kaaristo 2009).

Even though farm tourism in Estonia generally lacks agricultural components, there are some similarities with other countries. Farm tourism enterprises usually can be characterised as small-scale (lifestyle) businesses that are based on the entrepreneurs' individual interests, skills and knowledge (cf. Nilsson 2002). Often, personal interaction with the entrepreneur and his or her family is a key characteristic distinguishing farm tourism from other forms of tourism services. In addition, for a sustainable business, farm tourism entrepreneurs need to cooperate to some degree with other local entrepreneurs and inhabitants.

The terminological confusion with the 'tourism farm' is also facilitated by state legislation, because 'farm' is defined as an object of real estate and ownership, whereas there are no specifications of who is a farmer and what farm life is about. The Estonian Tourism Act states that "The word 'tourism farm' may be used in the names of guest houses, hostels, holiday villages and camps, holiday homes and bed-and-breakfasts located in rural areas."<sup>40</sup> Hence, the law does not prescribe that an enterprise called a 'tourism farm' should have any connection to a farm household at all. Therefore, it largely depends on the particular tourism entrepreneur him/herself how the place is staged and

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<sup>39</sup> In 2002, only 13.3% of rural tourism accommodation also offered farm work participation (see: Rural Tourism International.

Online: [www.ruraltourisminternational.org/Estonia](http://www.ruraltourisminternational.org/Estonia) Accessed 10.10.2013). The reason for this might be that many Estonians, as domestic tourists, still have a certain connection with farm work (i.e. from their childhood, visiting parents or grandparents who live in the countryside) and therefore do not consider it to be an attraction.

<sup>40</sup> Source: Tourism Act (2000).

performed as farm-like. The word ‘farm’ used in the name of the enterprise in the majority of cases may have become a signifier of rurality and local tradition that has no connection to the historical practice.

Michael Woods emphasises that a farm is “a discursive construct as well as a site of performance of farmer identity”, and “as most farmers live and work on their farm, they are connected to its landscape by a complex web of social, economic, cultural, moral and emotional interactions” (Woods 2011: 214). What happens to the rural culture and identities if the meaning of the farm becomes transformed in the process of commodification? What is gained or lost if local cultural heritage is a resource for tourism services but the traditions of rural life itself are in decline? What ruralities are Estonian rural entrepreneurs performing in their enterprises? These are some questions I want to raise here and come back to in the last chapter of the dissertation.

## **4. REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Methods for collecting data and particular cases under study are described in each empirical article included in the dissertation, therefore I will not repeat what was already stated in the papers; I will try to look at some of the problems related to methods and materials in concert, re-considering them in the light of the methodological ground – performance perspective – that influenced both how I collected empirical materials for the research as well as how I analysed and interpreted them.

### **4.1. Reflections on selecting materials for the study**

An important signpost in the process of case selection for this study was a pilot study co-conducted with a colleague Maarja Kaaristo and a supervisee of that time Inga Jaagus in eight different tourism enterprises of Rõuge and Haanja municipalities in September 2008. The main method used during the field trips was semi-structured interviews and we also took the role of tourists while staying overnight in three enterprises. These field trips gave some overview of the different types of tourism businesses in the region, their services, and ideas for what to study. I decided to exclude from my dissertation enterprises offering solely Bed & Breakfast type of services and focus rather on alternative services that, one way or the other, aimed to provide chances for different experiences of rurality.<sup>41</sup>

My interest was from the start to test performance as an analytical tool for studying rural enterprises. During the following years (2009–2012) I included additional cases in the study and co-conducted some of the fieldwork also with the co-authors of the publications (see more detailed accounts of these fieldworks and materials in the Articles II–IV). The principles of selecting relevant rural tourism and hospitality enterprises were driven from the methodological and theoretical framework as well as from the examples entrepreneurial practice itself provided.

All in all it may be considered a multi-sited ethnography in a sense that different field sites – tourism and hospitality enterprises – are linked together through a performance perspective (cf. Marcus 2010). During the aforementioned period I have conducted numerous short-term field trips, many of them repeated visits to the same enterprises. Overall my fieldwork concerned twenty-one enterprises dealing with tourism related services and two providing hospitality services (dining). (Some of the fieldwork materials collected are not included in the publications written for this dissertation and are still waiting to be composed into studies.) Most of the enterprises are located in southeast

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<sup>41</sup> Some results of this preliminary study have been examined using a different theoretical framework that focused on different taskscapes in tourism farms (Võsu & Kaaristo 2009).

Estonia, Võru County, and a few in other administrative units. Southeast Estonia turned out to be a region I got to know, establishing good contacts with several tourism entrepreneurs who knew the situation about rural tourism and local life in the region.

During the years I have also been involved in supervising an ethnographic fieldwork practice concerning three fieldwork trips with students in the summers of 2010, 2011 and 2013. The aim of these fieldworks was to study sauna culture in Võru County, with a special focus on the smoke sauna practice. Additionally I have attended the event called the Haanja smoke sauna weekend (aimed at tourists) in Haanja municipality in 2011–2013 that has given me a chance to observe heritage production and performance at the community level. These visits and some other encounters with local people in southeast Estonia, who are not involved in tourism businesses but occupied with other activities, gave valuable supplementary experiences of the rural situation in Estonia.

The overall criteria behind selecting particular enterprises and services were that the enterprise: (1) is micro-scale<sup>42</sup>; (2) is not involved in traditional agricultural production but provides some services or events related to tourism or hospitality; (3) the services or events are staged and performed in order to offer added value, i.e. an experience for tourists/clients; (4) the service can be based on local rural traditions (blacksmithing and doing farm-works in Article II; taking the smoke sauna in Article 3), but it can likewise introduce new practices into Estonian rural life such as keeping a restaurant in a rural home (Article IV); (5) the entrepreneur him/herself (or the entrepreneurial couple) is personally involved in staging and performing the experience service.<sup>43</sup> Another criterion, further defined already during the fieldwork, was that the service shares some characteristics with a theatrical performance (e.g. particular time-frame, script, roles, etc.).

With only one exception (home restaurant MerMer), all the studied enterprises contain the word *talu* (farm) in their name that makes it possible to reflect additionally on the changing meaning of the concept ‘farm’ in Estonia and accordingly the changing representations of rurality. During the research process it also turned out that in spite of a relatively small sample, the studied enterprises had varied personal histories that corresponded to the developments in farm-based tourism in Estonia (abandoning agriculture and dedicating fully to tourism services). Several entrepreneurs were return-migrants (originating from a village or a small town in southeast Estonia and after living in a bigger town or a city for some time establishing their business in a rural community

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<sup>42</sup> There were also some exceptions in Article 4 that involves two rural tourism enterprises that are not micro according to Estonian local standards (both concerning the physical size of the buildings, number of beds, and the size of groups targeted). However, in these cases the main interest was the smoke sauna service.

<sup>43</sup> With two exceptions in Article III, that aimed to analyse the variations in smoke sauna services in different rural tourism enterprises and therefore engaged two employees, then in all the studied cases the entrepreneur was the key informant and the key performer.

that was not their place of origin) and a few also in-migrants (urban inhabitants who decided to move to the countryside). These different backgrounds had an impact on the way that the entrepreneurs saw their identity and business in a particular place and how they developed their services.

I believe that the closer examination of a few cases and the limited number of services fits with the methodological framework and overall research aim and objectives, and enables to provide some detailed ethnographies of the studied services *as* performances. My purpose has not been to get a representative sample of different types of rural tourism enterprises all over Estonia, working out a detailed typology of different ‘experience services’ that are performed in these settings. A factor that limited the number of cases studied in the compiled articles was something I could not predict and discovered only when I started writing up the first analyses of the fieldwork materials. Namely, each type of the studied service or event was related to domain specific knowledge that varied significantly in each empirical paper (blacksmithing craft; establishing, making and taking the smoke sauna; restaurant culture). I had to familiarise myself with specific knowhow, that to a great extent was practical knowledge and at the same time position myself in the existing research on these specific topics.

There is one more important detail, related to both accessibility and mobility, that likewise constrained my fieldwork trips and partly influenced me to conduct most of the fieldwork in southeast Estonia, the region where I live close to (most of the field sites are situated 50–100 km from my home). Namely, I do not have a driver’s license and until December 2011 our family did not have a car. Therefore I had to rely on public transport, on a co-researcher’s car, but in most cases I went to the field sites by bicycle. The bicycle gave me the independence to go whenever I needed and travel between the villages as the distances were not far. However, due to climatic reasons, summer was the main season for making field trips. Going around by bike made me emphatic towards those (rural) Estonians who do not have a car and consider their ability to experience the different events that are performed at the places where there are a few or no options to access by public transport.

The bicycle also revealed something I could not predict. Entrepreneurs whom I visited by bike were positively surprised and I seemed to gain the extra credibility as a committed researcher (especially when the distance was around 80–90 km). The bike trips distinguished me from other tourists/clients at the enterprises, who almost always arrived by a car or by an ordered bus. There were also a few cyclotourists with whom I partly identified; although unlike them I did not choose the bicycle for recreational purposes but out of necessity. Some trips were quite exhausting, especially after being hit by heavy rain halfway to the destination. In retrospect, I understand that conducting field trips

by bicycle certainly attuned my mind as opposed to going by car, especially when I had the chance to make field trips with my husband driving.<sup>44</sup>

#### **4.2. Establishing contacts, ethical considerations, my roles in the research process**

As studying organisational culture or labour dynamics was not in the focus of my research I decided not to look for an opportunity to work in the studied enterprises.<sup>45</sup> Though as the research process developed so did my contacts with participants in the study and the distinction between front-stage and back-stage regions started to blur.

My position towards the topic was clearly of an outsider – I had no previous experience working in the service sector or as a small-scale entrepreneur. I also had very little experience of being a rural tourist/client in the settings I chose to study. Like many tourism researchers I was constantly puzzled by the question: “Where does the tourism end and the fieldwork begin?” (Rojek & Urry 1997: 9). Furthermore, I lacked educational training in business or organisational anthropology. Therefore I acted quite like a bricoleur who had to learn throughout the whole research process, improvise in many situations and often make do with what was at hand (cf. Humphreys *et al.* 2003: 14–15).

However, I was not a complete outsider because as an Estonian I shared some similar cultural background with the participants of my study, although this background was clearly more urban in my case. Conducting fieldwork ‘at home’ has its advantages as well as disadvantages (see Caputo 2000; Collins & Gallinat 2010). In this particular study I believe that the fact that I am Estonian, worked to my advantage in helping to establish contacts more smoothly; although it did not automatically help me to gain more trust because this can only be developed in long-term relationships.

In order not to harm the business and reputation of the entrepreneurs, I informed them about the aims of my research with our first contact (via phone or e-mail). In some cases the first face-to-face encounter was while I was a client, during which I explained the plans related to the dissertation, my interest in performance perspective and asked for their agreement to be a participant in my study. In other cases the first meeting was with me as a researcher, in such cases I usually had contacted the entrepreneur beforehand and asked for the meeting, during which I further explained the aims of the study.

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<sup>44</sup> I am grateful to him for the generous support for my research project and for bringing in a foreigner’s perspective, in addition to my “native” observations. Our dialogues helped me to develop an additional interpretational layer in making sense of the material.

<sup>45</sup> Micro-businesses are in a way more easily accessible (for getting permission to study) but at the same time more vulnerable – it is hard to conduct fieldwork without disturbing the intimate encounters between the host and other guests as well as the hosts’ family life.

After explicating my research interests all the entrepreneurs agreed to be participants in the study and we negotiated when and how I could continue further fieldwork observations and conduct interviews. We agreed that the enterprises and entrepreneurs include their real names in the articles because my interests are to give entrepreneurs as ‘stage directors’ and ‘key performers’ the right to be identified as *authors* of such creative expressions; and I had no intent to examine sensitive topics that would have harmed the reputation of their businesses (e.g. issues of family life; potential shadow economy).

The ‘performance’ was clearly an *etic* perspective taken into the field. Some entrepreneurs agreed that part of their activities or services shared performance-like qualities, whereas for some others such an analogy evoked doubt. The problem can be characterised as “lost in translation” which actually involves many sub-issues. Firstly, I conducted my fieldwork in Estonian whereas I wrote (and often also thought about) it in English. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the Estonian word *etendus* is directly associated with theatre, or also negatively with exaggerated self-expressions or scenes in social life, whereas the English concept ‘performance’ is semantically more rich, more neutral and flexible as an analytical tool.

This difference was very hard to explain to most of the entrepreneurs who are not involved in academic research and do not need to know such conceptual finesses. Theatre analogy worked both for me and against me, because it also created resistance – we do not perform (= act) here, we do it for real! This reaction indicated that rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs believed in the roles they were enacting and related performing to shallow acting or pretending and they had their own understanding of the authenticity of their services. (Some also brought negative examples from other enterprises that they see merely “perform” the service.)

Due to writing article drafts in English it was likewise hard to exchange written ethnography with the research participants and inform them about the details of the analysis; as most of the entrepreneurs either did not have the sufficient language skills or the time for reading my text. I solved this problem by making some follow-up phone calls or sending e-mails to clarify some aspects in my interpretations, especially if I was not sure it was correct. Despite the English barrier I have shared the final versions of the publications with most of the entrepreneurs who contributed to this study. Perhaps it is not only my research that raises the bigger question – to whom do we write it? – in the context of conducting domestic ethnographies and publishing in the English language ideology (cf. Bošković 2008: 3).

Different entrepreneurs had varied attitudes towards the possible impact of my study that was not of applied nature and could not bring any tangible benefit to their business. For instance, one entrepreneur said that he understands my research interests but the only way I could reciprocate is if I bring him some clients. Several entrepreneurs said that my repeated visits and our conversations made them reflect more actively on what and how they do what they are doing,

in the context of service providing. They also said that such heightened reflectivity was useful for articulating the specificity of their service, especially if we discussed and compared it with a similar service in other enterprises.

Another important ethical constraint was to avoid disturbing any tourists or clients while conducting my fieldwork observations, especially because all the enterprises were on a micro-scale and I could not become just a member of the crowd, as it is possible in mass tourism settings. Here different services required different approaches. The Tammuri farm restaurant host took me as an assistant in the kitchen and he explained to the clients who I was and what I am doing. Forging a lucky horseshoe for newlyweds acquired the permission from the couple that was given in two cases and refused in one case. Permission to observe was not needed in the cases where I experienced a service myself as the client, but I often had to find a companion or two because it would have been either impossible or too expensive to order the service alone (e.g. at a restaurant where a minimum of two clients is needed; or the smoke sauna that can be heated for one client, but it is too costly). I avoided taking the smoke sauna with a group of clients because nakedness may not be appropriate with strangers (this also concerns myself as a woman).

The fact that in the beginning of the research process I had to combine the two roles, the client as well as the researcher, also restricted my fieldwork. Considering that some of the experience services studied are quite pricy I could not afford myself too many field visits as a client. As an alternative, several entrepreneurs providing the smoke sauna service accepted me on the day they heated it for their own family or after a group of clients had left, which made it possible to feel the steam on my own skin yet did not make me a customer in a conventional sense. This issue of the double role as a client/researcher became later more ambivalent after repeated visits to some enterprises, where I was called “a guest<sup>46</sup>”, invited to dine with the family and offered accommodation for free. It happened during some longer stays when I also participated in doing housework whether indoors or outdoors. One entrepreneur, after we had gone mushrooming together, expressed his confusion saying: “I don’t know how we should consider you, as a researcher visiting us, an acquaintance, or a friend?”.

### **4.3. Performance and ethnography: Further reflections on methods for collecting and analysing materials**

Since the beginning of this study the performance perspective served both as a methodological and conceptual frame as well as a lens that guided data collection and analysis. Michael Woods suggests that “research on performing ruralities has tended to combine interviews with participant observation,

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<sup>46</sup> Actually, according to my fieldwork experiences the majority rural tourism entrepreneurs call their clients “guests”, the word “tourist” is used very rarely.

allowing for the researcher to directly experience and record performances as well as for the observed actor to describe and discuss their actions in their own terms.” (Woods 2010: 838) For the similar aims of my research, ethnographic fieldwork seemed to be the most suitable method for collecting materials.

What is the link between fieldwork and performance? Ethnography itself is a site-specific art that shares several similarities with performing in social life as well as in theatre and there are many possibilities where different aspects of conducting ethnography may have performance-like qualities (see Madison 2012). Ethnographic practice can be considered an improvised performance that involves skills such as flexibility, intuition, spontaneity, and creativity (Humphreys *et al.* 2003: 15). As Michael Pickering highlights: “experience acts as a methodological touchstone in sounding an insistence on the significance of listening to others and attending to what is relatively distinctive in their way of knowing their immediate social world, for it is only by doing this that we can glean any sense of what is involved in their subjectivities, self-formation, life histories and participation in social and cultural identities.” (Pickering 2008: 23) It would have been impossible to study services and events as live performances without having first-hand experience of them.

My study can be classified as a set of “micro-ethnographies” (Wolcott 1995: 102) that focus on specific performances (cf. “cultural scenes” and “social situations” defined by Spradley & McCurdy 1972) such as certain services and events in rural tourism and hospitality enterprises. Furthermore, I determined the main participants in the study as entrepreneurs being stage directors of, and key actors in, these performances. The implicit script, stagedness, and temporal and spatial frames helped to set the focus as well as guide the fieldwork observations. I did not have an ambition to study the culture of a micro-enterprise or entrepreneurial process in the way it is done in anthropological studies, although some general suggestions for how to conduct fieldwork in business organisations were relevant for consideration (see Bryman & Bell 2011).<sup>47</sup> The principles of conducting the fieldwork that consisted of several short-term repeated visits were likewise influenced by principles of theatre performance analysis and traditions of European ethnology in Estonia.<sup>48</sup>

I decided to rely on repeated short-term visits lasting from one to three days per enterprise. In every case (except some enterprises examined for Article III), I tried to keep in mind the following logic – (a) a visit to the enterprise as a

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<sup>47</sup> Business anthropology or organisational anthropology is usually conducted in complex organisational settings (see Caulkins & Jordan 2012; Jordan 2003).

<sup>48</sup> Tom O’Dell has noticed that “ethnologists working within their own national cultural settings have long worked with serially organised forms of short-term fieldwork – moving repeatedly between the field and the desk in the attempt to distance themselves from, and gain perspective on, the materials they have collected” (O’Dell 2009: 25). However, he adds that the methods and techniques for conducting such “quick ethnographies” (Handwerker 2001) under time constraints of the contemporary society are relatively little written about (*ibid.*).

client and/or as a researcher explaining my interests and introducing myself to the entrepreneur and getting acquainted with the setting; (b) repeated visits to the enterprise as a researcher and in some cases additionally also as a client for participant observation and interviewing. In the repeated visits I planned pre-performance as well as post-performance observations (see reflections below) at the enterprise in order to discuss some details with the entrepreneur beforehand or to reflect upon the performance afterwards (cf. different phases of observing and interviewing suggested by Becker & Geer 1972). Certainly a selective methodological focus on performance and performing was limiting the study in many ways – some of these limitations I have mentioned in each single article, some I will discuss in Chapter 6.

The main sources used in empirical articles were fieldwork observations, field-notes and photos, semi-structured interviews as well as informal conversations. I also used secondary research materials (such as: internet sources providing tourist information about studied places, enterprises' websites and Facebook accounts, texts and photos published in magazines and newspapers, reviews and customers' impressions published in weblogs, etc.) in order to better contextualise my own sources and get some additional data. As follows, I will reflect shortly on how different fieldwork methods and materials worked in this study.

It became clear in several fieldwork experiences that if I wanted to participate I had to perform myself. It was especially important when an embodied experience, the feeling of doing something was needed. When looking back to my degree of participation during the fieldwork, it was mostly varying between participant-as-observer and the observer-as-participant (see Flick 2006: 216–217). Although, in some situations I was more inclined towards observation (e.g. in the case of the lucky horseshoe performance in Article III; in cases where observations at the site were made in order to get additional data for interviews – some enterprises studied for Article IV) and in other cases, as a client, more towards participation (especially in cases of taking the smoke sauna). I would distinguish three important phases in participant observation: (a) *pre-performance (sometimes also pre-production) phase* – planning, setting the stage, putting on costumes, making other preparations; (b) *attending the performance*; (c) *post-performance phase* (usually related to reflecting upon the performance). Although I had a performance lens already before observing particular services or events, a script of a particular performance still emerged in retrospective (cf. Wolcott 1995: 83–85).

My aim was to disturb entrepreneurs' business interactions and everyday life as little as possible (perhaps not successfully during all visits) and participating first as a client gave the best chance for this, although it limited my observations mainly to the "front-stage". Such a position relates to the wider problem of fieldwork (in business settings) – to which degree impressions are managed by the people we study? However, because of my methodological premises I did not attempt to reveal "the reality" behind entrepreneurs'

performances and statements but I rather looked at which impressions and how are produced (cf. Czarniawska 2007: 38). Entrepreneurs into whose enterprises I returned, agreed, in one way or another, to share the “back-stage” of their service during the repeated visits. As my research developed I understood that the participation extended to pre- and post-performance situations gave more knowledge for contextualising a particular service or event and for understanding the entrepreneur’s values and principles behind the business. For instance, observing a working day of the blacksmith in his smithy revealed both spectacular as well as routine aspects of the job; attending a guided hike with the host in the surrounding forests of his farmstead helped to see his attitude towards local cultural heritage; taking part in the educational workshop for making smoke sauna ham helped to see the educational intentions of an entrepreneur. These off-performance experiences and reflections are not explicit in the articles but I consider them a valuable part of my fieldwork. Additionally, some fieldwork was conducted together with the co-authors and I certainly benefited from the reflections that emerged from our dialogues and shared observations.

In general participant observations were an important part of data collection although I also relied on interviews as manifestations of entrepreneurs’ experiences. Through my own immediate experiences of rural tourism and hospitality services I learned about the nature of personalised hospitality and the importance of the host’s role as key performer of the service, the diversity of roles, and the knowledge and skills a micro-scale entrepreneur needs to have in order to provide memorable experiences.

In ethnography like in performance analysis/studies there is no tangible object of research – it has to be constructed in the process of research. The problem with making notes or recording a performance in social life is quite similar to the difficulties listed by theatre scholars – each performance is a unique event happening only here and now and every description (even a full video recording) is merely a representation of it. Each performance I studied likewise had different meaningful elements. Making field notes was important throughout doing the fieldwork, although I had to struggle with the same dilemma for all researchers who want to participate while observing – when to act and when to take notes and how to balance the two? It was especially challenging in the first year of doing fieldwork when I had less experience. In some situations making notes was impossible due to my full engagement in the performance so I had to rely on post-performance recollections. Note-taking was helpful in or after situations when audio-recording was not possible, but it likewise helped to outline the script of the performances studied and to compose some preliminary impressions and interpretations. I discovered that my previous note-taking skills as a theatre scholar turned out to be very useful. These preliminary observations together with photos supported writing up more detailed analyses for publication.

In this research, photographs were the instruments of collecting additional visual data for supporting my observations, as a memory tool and a form of “visual notes” rather than an object of research in its own (cf. Flick 2006: 234–235). Photos turned out to be especially useful for recollecting and re-constructing a particular *mise-en-scène* or for describing particular surroundings, material settings and interiors. I always asked for permission to take photos, especially if there were clients involved. I explained that all images will be used for research purposes only and I am fully responsible for that. It was easier to use the camera at the events that were photographed by other participants (e.g. in the case of the lucky horseshoe performance that can be seen as part of a wedding ritual). For ethical reasons I did not attempt to make any photos of other people (whether hosts or guests) taking a sauna as the naked body is socially more vulnerable.

Participant observations and taking photos were not always easy to combine, especially in the cases where I was more engaged as a participant (or a co-performer). For instance, while assisting at the home restaurant kitchen it was difficult to use the camera; both for practical reasons but also because I felt that photographing would have distracted me from fully experiencing what was happening. Indeed, it is also related to merging the roles of participant and observer in the case of short term fieldwork – while doing ethnography at the same place more times it would have given a chance to focus on different methods at different times. However, this conflicting experience between “the tourist gaze” (Urry 1990) and embodied performance made me reflect also on tourists different engagement at events – while being in a more passive role as a spectator one can focus on using the camera, whereas if the script and setting involves active participation in the performance this may not be possible or desired (cf. Edensor 2001). In order to focus on experiencing different aspects of performances and also because of the lack of skills I deliberately decided not to use a video-camera. The video recording of a performance gives only one perspective although it can be used as supportive material in performance analysis, especially for recollecting certain details (cf. Pavis 2003).

Participant observation, conversations and interviews worked as complementary sources. Although interviews may be considered as idealised articulations of ones actions, they are still accounts that can be attributed to particular subjects who thereby reflect upon what they are doing, justify and explain their actions and motives (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 170). From the phenomenological perspective that aims to understand not to explain entrepreneurship (Bjerke & Rämö 2011). Interviews can be considered the entrepreneurs’ self-narratives in which they express their own experiences, values, principles of planning and organising services and interacting with customers; in other words, their entrepreneurial identities. Chris Steyaert believes that if performance and narrative perspectives are used complementarily they enable to bring into focus “the interrelationships between narration, drama, metaphor, discourse and deconstruction” and entrepreneurship

as “co-authorship in the form of collective stories, dramatic scripts, generative metaphors and concurring discourses” (Steyaert 2004: 9). The synthesis of performance and narrative perspective is something I should work on more in future studies but entrepreneurs’ own narratives were important sources in all empirical papers.

The majority of interviews for this study were conducted with tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs (and in two cases with employees); some entrepreneurial couples were also interviewed together. The interviews were semi-structured but flexible in style so that the borders between interviewing and having a conversation became fluid in some phases of the interview (especially if it lasted for longer and involved also some activities while talking). The overall number of interviews conducted during fieldwork trips was twenty-seven<sup>49</sup> and they lasted from one hour to three hours. All interviews were conducted in the enterprises studied, usually after participant observation or informal conversation. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by me or together with a co-author; and later during the process of writing up the analysis, excerpts from interviews for publications were translated by me or by a co-author. Co-conducting interviews with colleagues created a chance to better cover the themes (two pairs of ears, shared attention) and worked especially well while interviewing entrepreneurial couples. Perhaps in some situations two interviewers per one interviewee may have created some discomfort and less open responses. In practice it also helped to divide the tasks between the two researchers (one focuses on interviewing, the other on making photos). Some important statements were expressed in informal conversations that were not recorded but the content of which I described in the field notes. If it was needed, I conducted follow-up interviews for giving the entrepreneurs a chance to elaborate more on their business or specified some additional details after completing the transcriptions via e-mails or phone calls.

The nature and themes of the interview questions are described in each publication as these varied in different cases, here I just summarise some main points. Interview questionnaires were designed with the main focus on the service or event under study, but in each case a set of questions concerned also: the history of the enterprise and the place (as most of the enterprises were situated in farmsteads), entrepreneur’s background, the relations between other activities with tourism and hospitality service, etc. Interview questions were structured around the themes that I later analysed in the articles following some basic principles of theatre performance analysis (e.g. themes involved – setting, staging principles, performing roles). Though, I used performance terminology moderately in actual questions and gave the entrepreneurs the chance to decide how they want to describe and interpret their services and principles of their business; the material as well as intangible elements they aimed to mediate for

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<sup>49</sup> The total number of interviews comprises also materials that are not analysed in the articles.

the clients (cf. suggestion for language use in interviews made by Gilmore & Carson 2007: 37).

In several interviews biographical and life story aspects turned out to be important which indicates for the further need to explore this facet in rural micro-scale entrepreneurship. Biographical aspects helped to understand entrepreneurs' personal motivations and pointed out the importance of experiential authenticity of provided services. All in all, interviews had varied functions in different research papers. In Articles II and III they were used more as additional material, whereas in Article IV interviews as articulations of how heritage and local cultural identity was perceived carried more weight alongside the analysis of material settings (sauna buildings and their surroundings).

For analysing interview materials I used qualitative thematic analysis (Gillham 2005) that emerged from the transcribed materials in the light of research questions and theoretical framework. The themes were partly prescribed by research questions and key themes represented in interview questionnaires (e.g. principles of staging, performing roles, creating settings) but they likewise emerged from the material as interviewees brought up additional topics that were relevant for them. Interview analysis could not be formalised according to a specific method because interviews were only one type of source in this study. In each particular case the analysis of empirical materials depended also on additional aspects that characterised a particular enterprise and the service (e.g. connections between home-restaurant-business, commodification and edutainment, heritage and local identity). I have considered these aspects in more detail in each article.

If in the beginning of this section I referred to Michael Woods' suggestion to use ethnography for studying how rurality is performed, then in conclusion I turn back to his other methodological remark for bringing up the problems related to analysis. Namely, Woods admits how "considerable challenges still exist in adequately capturing and interpreting embodied performances, especially where these include more-than-representational elements." (Woods 2010: 838) Partly this concern is related to the general untranslatability of embodied experience into a text but I believe that performance analysis methods from theatre research along with the broader performance perspective considerably helped me in accomplishing the analysis, especially in the case of clearly framed and structured performances.

As a former theatre scholar I chose for analysis some key elements of theatrical performance such as scenography, objects, costumes, actors' performances, the story (script), and the overall coherence between different elements (cf. Pavis: 2003: 37–40). Actually, ethnographic inquiries that put emphasis on action often consider them *as performances* by default, which involves an understanding of certain rules guiding the action, decision-making, the ways people talk as well as do things (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 168–171). For broadening the scope of performance and focusing, for instance, on how heritage or rurality is produced and performed, I was also considering

analytical frameworks from folkloristics (Stoeltje & Bauman 1988) and performance studies (Schechner 2002; Taylor 2003).<sup>50</sup> I examined the collected material also relying on some analytical key questions for the study of rural performances that were presented in Chapter 2.

And last but not least I have to admit, that all co-authors turned out to be good partners in writing up the analysis, making me question the preliminary assumptions and to elaborate my interpretations.

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<sup>50</sup> There is no single analytical strategy for studying socio-cultural performances and as a recent issue of *Ethnologia Europaea* (2010, 40: 2) demonstrates also in the disciplines of ethnology and folkloristics the genres of cultural performances and the ways to study them are quite varied.

## 5. SUMMARIES OF THE ARTICLES

The dissertation includes four articles published between the years 2010 and 2013. The first article is a theoretical paper, the other three are case studies that apply and develop different performance perspectives analysing varied phenomena in contemporary rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship in Estonia. The order of articles reflects the development of my ideas throughout the research process as well as the connections between the different themes treated in separate papers. During my doctoral studies and while working as a researcher I have also published other research papers on similar topics; but I decided not to include these in this dissertation because some of the publications involve a different type of empirical material and some others have been published in Estonian, making them inaccessible for an international audience.

The articles selected for this dissertation have similarities as well as differences concerning their content, both in terms of how they treat performance perspective as well as particular empirical material. However, what makes this selection a coherent ensemble is the concept of 'performance' and its potential in the cultural analysis treated in all the papers.

The first study provides a broader theoretical background for the whole topic demonstrating how theatre analogies may be interpreted differently in cultural theory and what are the epistemological and heuristic problems related to using metaphorical analogies. The next three papers treat different empirical material from rural tourism and hospitality enterprises in Estonia and use performance as an analytical tool with some variations. Article II is a bridge from theory to practice – it elaborates and adapts Erving Goffman's approach to social performance and applies it to the analysis of dining experiences in two home restaurants. The nature of empirics changes towards more traditional performances of rurality in Article III which considers forging a lucky horseshoe and a day demonstrating historical farm works as two performances in rural tourism settings. In this paper the performance model used is explicitly similar to the theatre performance as both studied events shared similar traits with the latter. Article IV provides a study of a traditional form of bathing in southeast Estonia – taking a smoke sauna – as a tourism service. Producing/staging and performing heritage related to the smoke sauna by tourism entrepreneurs and thereby expressing their identity are in the analytical focus of the paper.

In all papers, devoting attention to performing and staging enables to bring out how rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs as cultural agents are making use of different cultural repertoires, how they combine and present different elements and mediate their services for the tourist/clients. In the next sections, I will summarise the content, main results and conclusions of each article.

## 5.1. Article I

**Võsu, Ester (2010). Metaphorical analogies in approaches of Victor Turner and Erving Goffman: Dramaturgy in Social Interaction and Dramas of Social Life. – *Sign System Studies*, 38 (1/4), 130–165.**

The first theoretical article is an outcome of my preparatory work on literature (cultural theories using theatre-related concepts) that preceded the empirical studies on rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship. The paper provides an extended theoretical and methodological background to the performance perspective and to the other studies included in the thesis (see similar considerations also in Chapter 2.1.).

The paper examines the uses of the theatre analogy in the social sciences and cultural research and takes a closer inspection of two seminal authors – Victor Turner and Erving Goffman – and their theoretical contribution. Namely, Turner's concept of 'social dramas' from anthropology and Goffman's 'dramaturgy' of social interactions from sociology. The article explores some key resemblances between theatre and social reality that emerge from these analogies and sheds light on what kind of interpretations of culture and society come on the scene when theatre analogies are put into action.

Furthermore, the paper clarifies some major differences between Turner's and Goffman's understandings of theatre analogy and accordingly between micro- and macro-level approaches that use theatre analogy. Turner bases his analogy on the structure of the dramatic text and especially on the (dramatic) conflict, whereas Goffman builds his analogy on the principles of stage acting, and regards characters and roles as major resemblances between performing on stage and in social life. Even though Turner's concept of 'social drama' is not used in the other publications included in the thesis, the present paper gives a necessary background for understanding the differences between micro- and macro-levels in cultural analysis, and helps to illuminate the interdependence of analytical models based on theatre analogy and the empirical material chosen for study.

The main conclusions of the article are:

- theatre metaphors provide us with an opportunity to recognise certain resemblances from a perspective that might explicate not just familiar but also unfamiliar similarities; the closer the source and target domains of the metaphorical analogy are, the more seductive it is to compare them and, yet, the more challenging to mix likeness with sameness;
- from the methodological perspective, using theatre as an example can help the researcher to transform the flow of social life into more manageable dramas or role performances (i.e. formulate an object or units of analysis)

although performances on stage are ‘framed’ and ‘staged’ according to aesthetical and fictional criteria;

- not all social situations and events in social life can be explained by using theatre analogy, primarily because of the lack of some prerequisite resemblances between them; the most fruitful uses of theatre analogy in cultural theory have been able to pay attention to the similarities as well as the differences to theatre that the object of analysis has;
- the analogy of ‘dramatic text’ or ‘drama’ as a narrative structure organising events is more suitable for studying occasions that are related to structural conflicts or changes in the society (Turner’s approach); whereas the analogy of ‘dramaturgy’ (i.e. different ways of acting, embodying characters or roles etc.) that emerges in the improvisational theatre and does not necessarily need consistent scripts or major conflicts, fits better for exploring everyday social interactions (Goffman’s approach);
- while selecting the dynamic model (dramaturgy of social performances), Goffman simultaneously studies the stability of social order, whereas Turner uses the firmly structured social drama to observe processes of change that nevertheless strive towards preserving social stability in the society;
- the major epistemological problem with theatre analogy in cultural/social theory is that: (a) there are no universal properties that could be taken as the foundation for all theatrical analogies, whereas theatre metaphors usually rely on certain popular assumptions about conventional Western theatre; in theatre practice there exist particular types of directing and acting styles and thus any similarity or difference between theatre and social life may be contradicted by a different kind of theatre practice; (b) metaphorical analogies used by different authors demonstrate ambiguity or inconsistency with respect to what sort of drama or theatre has been picked as the basis for the analogy; (c) the more general problem concerns all metaphorical analogies – they must be selective in order to work as an analogy, and each selective choice impoverishes both the source domain and the target domain (theatre in all its aesthetic forms and styles is a far too complex a phenomenon to be reduced to simple universal characteristics that would make it similar to social life, and social reality, in turn, is much too diverse to be explained with theatrical analogies only).

## 5.2. Article II

**Võsu, Ester & Kannike, Anu (2011). My Home Is My Stage: Restaurant Experiences In Two Estonian Lifestyle Enterprises. – *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 5 (2), 19–47.**

This paper creates a link between cultural theory and practice taking Erving Goffman’s approach to social performances as its point of departure and

develops it further for the study of two home restaurants in the southeast and on the northern coast of Estonia. Both restaurants are run by amateur chefs and can be characterised as lifestyle businesses providing a hospitality service – dining at somebody’s home in the countryside outside a conventional restaurant ‘frame’. In the case of Tammuri farm the host has returned to his grandmother’s farmstead and actually calls his business “a farm restaurant”; whereas in the case of MerMer the entrepreneurial couple have an urban background and they purchased an abandoned farmstead in an old fishermen’s village, first for establishing a new home and later started a restaurant.

The performance perspective used in the study as an analytical framework evolved organically and reciprocally with the preliminary analysis of fieldwork materials. It focuses on four main aspects of the home restaurant experience as a performance: (1) context and frames; (2) settings; (3) food; (4) roles performed by the hosts. Additional attention is paid to communicative aspects of the home restaurant service (e.g. communication through the setting as well as roles and food) and the borders of home and business in more general are examined in the analysis.

The topics of creativity, lifestyle entrepreneurship, peculiarities of performing in small-scale settings, and hybridisation of the countryside in terms of consumption are further discussed in the Introduction, Chapter 2 and Chapter 6.

The main results can be summarised as follows:

- food is given a status of the dominant performance medium in the home restaurants although the values and stories related to it are different and indicate what is personally meaningful for the chef (localness, organic, quality, rarity, taste) not necessarily local rural food traditions;
- rural surroundings of home restaurants play an important role in attuning clients’ minds before and during the visit although the ways food is prepared and served are rather urban in style (gourmet cooking, fine dining, influences from different European cuisines);
- the interior settings of home restaurants are a hybrid of styles and reflect the hosts’ personal tastes – rurality may be stressed with certain architectural elements as well as materials used in the design where it can be contrasted with other objects of different historical and cultural origin;
- the chefs consider being an amateur without previous experience in the restaurant sector as an advantage that gives them more freedom to improvise; the aim of the hosts is to provide an experience of fine dining in a carefully set domestic atmosphere with a personalised service;
- self-commodification is a crucial part of the service in micro-enterprises run by a single entrepreneur or an entrepreneurial couple; one person takes several roles while staging and performing the service (in theatrical terms: scriptwriter, director, stage designer, actor; in restaurant terms: victualler,

chef, assistant cook, waiter, sommelier, etc.); such multiple role-performances and an aim to distinguish one's performance from the professional mainstream restaurants makes the service more personalised yet sets certain limits on the restaurant's repertoire;

- the two analysed lifestyle businesses share several similarities with commercial homes and alternative dining establishments in other European countries pointing to the blurring boundaries between private and public spaces (private homes becoming stages for commercial performances) and 'homeliness' as an added value of a commodified service;
- a Goffmanian approach enabled a detailed and at the same time holistic analysis of the services as performances; the limits of the approach were likewise revealed – it highlighted mainly the techniques of impression management and calculated staging and less the aspects related to the pre- or post-performance phases (e.g. work routines); in order to involve the interactive aspects of home restaurants' performances further studies of clients' experiences are needed.

### 5.3. Article III

**Bardone, Ester; Rattus, Kristel & Jääts, Liisi (2013). Creative Commodification of Rural Life from a Performance Perspective: A Study of Two South-East Estonian Farm Tourism Enterprises. – *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 44 (2), 205–227.**

The second paper introduces the idea of 'creative commodification' in connection with the performance perspective of rural tourism enterprises. The article sees small-scale rural tourism entrepreneurs as active cultural agents and claims that commodification of rural life may encourage entrepreneurs to express their creativity by constructing products and services as well as by re-examining their identities. The analytical framework of the study concentrates on performance-like elements of the examined events such as scripts, settings, roles and staging principles, and shares some similarities with Article II.

In the focus of the analysis there are two small-scale enterprises in southeast Estonia and two events performed therein – a farm work day in Mesipuu Farm that demonstrates historical activities, tools and machinery used in a farm and (2) forging a lucky horseshoe for newlywed couples that is performed solely by a blacksmith who is host of the Sepa Farm. Mesipuu Farm is exceptional among other enterprises chosen for this study because the hosts are still involved in agriculture on a family farm and perform farm works in their everyday life, in addition to demonstrating these to the visitors and providing some tourism services. Sepa Farm is established by the host at a farmstead he purchased with the main aim of running his professional smithy and providing some additional services and attractions for tourists. Both studied events contain an edutainment

dimension, although in the case of the farm work day the educational aims are more explicit; whereas in the case of the blacksmith performance the entertainment is dominant.

The events as performances were closely related to the entrepreneurs' individual interpretations and experiences, and emotionally significant elements of 'rurality,' which were mediated to tourists and visitors. The enchantment and efficacy of these performances emerged from the creativity and emotional engagement of the entrepreneurs as key performers; skilfully acting out certain tasks in appropriate settings and accompanying them with edutaining explanatory stories.

The topics of creative commodification and the agent's role in this process, edutainment in rural tourism, peculiarities of performing in small-scale settings and lifestyle entrepreneurship, are discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6.

#### The main results and conclusions of the article are:

- the resources for commodifying rural life in farm tourism enterprises may vary, from the spatial elements (e.g. farm buildings, yards, and surrounding landscapes) to the entrepreneur's know-how (skills and knowledge) and personality;
- commodification of rural life may have its threats for the rural society but it may likewise facilitate tourism entrepreneurs' creative personalised interpretations of rurality in the products and services they provide;
- two distinct performances, with edutaining components, demonstrated that these were examples of lifestyle entrepreneurship and opportunities to indulge in personalised experiences of rural life, rather than potentialities for getting a significant additional income;
- a performance approach enabled to shed light on the multiple roles an entrepreneur may adopt in the small-scale farm tourism business, being simultaneously a scriptwriter, a director, a set designer, and a performer of the attractions she or he produces for guests;
- the principles of staging turned attention to the ways in which entrepreneurs constructed and conceptualised their performances, how they mediated them for tourists, and to what extent they relied on cultural repertoires combining these with personal interpretations;
- the performance perspective on commodification revealed that personalised meanings and values of rural practices and environments may emerge from individual enactments of rurality;
- the focus *on* and *of* performance enabled to demonstrate its complexity as a rural commodity and creative (re)production of rurality by entrepreneurs involved in the tourism business; the performance perspective provided a structured approach to material and immaterial dimensions of studied events and helped to recognise what was significant in the performance as a whole.

#### 5.4. Article IV

**Võsu, Ester; Sooväli-Sepping, Helen (2012). Smoking Out Local Traditions? Identity and Heritage Production in South-East Estonian Rural Tourism Enterprises. – *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore*, 51, 77–108.**

The last article included in the dissertation does not apply a performance perspective explicitly using the analogy with the theatrical performance (as in Articles II and III) but interprets ‘performance’ in a broader sense concentrating on how cultural heritage and identity are produced (i.e. staged), displayed and enacted in the rural tourism context. The paper is part of my ongoing research on heritage production in southeast Estonia, with a special focus on the smoke sauna heritage.

The article explores current processes related to the practice of smoke sauna, its transformation from tradition into heritage. In the focus of the article are nine tourism enterprises in Võru County and the smoke sauna service provided therein. Under closer examination appear a multitude of meanings and values that the smoke sauna carries from the tourism entrepreneur’s perspective and the possible connections between the smoke sauna and personally interpreted cultural identity. The theoretical approach handles heritage and identity production from the constructivist viewpoint, as a process conducted by tourism entrepreneurs, in which personal memories, stories and material settings are displayed or performed in order to make them experienceable for the public. Heritage and identity production are seen as analogous to theatre directing, because both involve a selection of elements from the cultural repertoire in order to create meaningful performances or displays for the ‘audience’. Rural tourism entrepreneurs rely on different strategies of stage management and direction in order to create the settings and mediation of the sauna experience – personal stories and material elements are woven with collective narratives and symbols. Through the analysis of the materiality, meanings and values, and embodied aspects of the smoke sauna as a tourism service, different aspects of heritage production and mediation are studied.

The issues of staging and production (of culture) in rural tourism, personal mediation of the service and the entrepreneur’s role as culture broker are further discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6 in the dissertation.

The main results and conclusions of the paper are:

- rural tourism entrepreneurs did not consider the smoke sauna a collectively shared manifestation of cultural identity but rather as an expression of individual identity and lifestyle; the ways the smoke sauna as a service is mediated to tourists depends on what role the tradition plays in the entrepreneur’s identity; a considerable diversity exists in the meanings and values that entrepreneurs relate to the smoke sauna and in the ways that they

express these meanings and values in sauna buildings and in the service provided;

- three major attitudes towards the smoke sauna as a local tradition and heritage were distinguishable regarding the saunas as settings: (1) inherited local tradition (continuity of the family practice); (2) adapting local tradition and creating individually experienced heritage (entrepreneurs as creative bricoleurs); (3) thematising heritage – creating new smoke saunas in an archaic style (entrepreneurs as intentional heritage producers);
- the role that most of the entrepreneurs took in producing the smoke sauna service was that of ‘stage manager’, or one who is concerned with the materiality of the setting; only a few entrepreneurs took the role of an ‘artistic director’, responsible for a more complex interpretation of the cultural tradition mediated within a service that integrates material as well as immaterial elements forming a coherent production;
- live interpretation of the sauna tradition by the host, hostess or employee and sharing the sauna experience with clients is the most challenging way of cultural brokerage as it demands self-reflexivity and skilfully controlled self-commodification;
- emotional authenticity and experiential authenticity of the smoke sauna involving personally meaningful material as well as immaterial elements were more significant to most of the entrepreneurs than the possibility to associate the service with historically authentic representations of the regional cultural heritage;
- in the majority of cases the smoke sauna service is not calculatedly staged as part of the local heritage experience that the enterprise provides (considering the coherence between the setting, other services and products);
- the smoke sauna service in Võru County still represents the early phase of the commodification process – the heritage value of the smoke sauna tradition is not fully acknowledged and exploited, and heritage production is therefore highly dependent on the entrepreneurs’ varied individual interpretations of the service.

## 6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In the concluding discussion I do not want to repeat what was already emphasised in previous chapters. Rather, I want to provide some critical observations that a performance perspective leads towards. Firstly I (re-) examine some of the challenges that performing rural tourism and hospitality services makes us to face in the modern countryside. This concerns especially hybrid Estonian rurality in which tourism farms and producing experience services have become the normality. In the second section of the chapter I point to future possibilities for improving the performance perspective as an analytical tool for examining rural tourism and hospitality practices.

### 6.1. Challenges of staging and performing rural tourism and hospitality services

Performance as a practice has a potential to effectively integrate material and imaginative conceptions of rurality through their intersections in particular actions that take place at a particular time and place (cf. Cloke 2006: 24). The socio-historical dimension of the rural cultural context has to be taken into consideration in order to put a single performance into the wider evolvement of continuities and discontinuities.

My main aim in this dissertation was to provide a performance perspective on contemporary Estonian small-scale rural tourism and hospitality services; and entrepreneurs as *active cultural agents* in the process of rural commodification. I claimed that their position as directors/performers in service management is rather complex when we examine the creation of particular material settings, scripts and roles. I examined the connections between staging (producing) and performing services and events in tourism and hospitality settings in which entrepreneurs make creative use of different cultural repertoires. The elements selected from a cultural repertoire indicate personally meaningful versions of rurality in which elements of tradition playfully combine historical facts, novelties and personal stories. However, considering the micro-enterprises analysed in the articles, the cultural creativity expressed in staging and performing cannot be idealised because the resources (both material as well as intangible) an entrepreneur possesses are often limited and therefore acting as a *bricoleur* is a practical necessity.

Critical examinations of theatre analogy in the experience economy have pointed to one of its major shortcomings, namely, that experience management cannot be overly calculated because of the ephemeral and unpredictable quality of clients' experiences as well as their role in co-creating experiences (Löfgren 2005). What influences the *stageability of rural (tourism) experiences*? Experience economy advocates seem to ignore that experiences emerge not only in designed settings and events, but potentially in all everyday-situations.

Indeed, experiences vary in intensity from the ordinary to extraordinary, but the stagedness also indicates that “the greater the degree of self-conscious preparation and stylisation, the more the experience may be shared, but also the higher the risk that the prepared quality of the event will be regarded as restricting rather than liberating” (Abrahams 1986: 63). If experience services become too rationally calculated and too well organised, then what the entrepreneur and the clients may lose is the chance for the unexpected or surprise element, that may be the important prerequisite for a memorable experience. From the performance perspective, *improvisation* – both in a sense of vernacular and artistic creativity – may have a crucial role.

Recently one of the entrepreneurs’ told me a story that illustrates the ambivalence of the stageability of experience services in small rural settings. One day she received a phone call from someone in the neighbourhood involved in the tourism business concerning a group of visitors from Germany, interested in trying the ham cured in smoke sauna. Unfortunately, she had only a small amount of this ham at the time, but she nevertheless agreed to accept the foreign tourists. When the guests arrived to her open kitchen, one of them noticed that she had a wood-burning stove with a pot of semolina porridge simmering. The visitors curiously asked if she cooked on such an old school stove for her family in everyday life. They wanted to taste the porridge and after a spontaneously shared meal the conversation continued on various topics. A few days later, the entrepreneur got an e-mail thanking her for the real countryside experience. What had she staged? All she did was to invite the tourists to the ‘back-stage’ and let them have their own experience. Indeed, such ‘back-stage’ encounters cannot happen every day – some privacy must be preserved.

From the performance perspective it turned out to be insightful to focus on how a micro-entrepreneur combines different roles in one person and switches between them. However, the burden of the solo performance also revealed a darker side of the business. First, *self-commodification always has a cost*, and in small-scale enterprises it means accepting a blurring of the boundaries between a private and shared life, as well as the emotional burden of the work. Considering what several entrepreneurs have disclosed to me – there is a limit to sharing one’s private space as well as to the enthusiasm an entrepreneur as a performer can invest into performing the service. The result of ‘deep acting’ (Hochschild 1983) may be burnout or frustration because the performer gives more than he or she gets back as an added value of a lifestyle business. Therefore, it was not surprising that performing the role of a ‘culture broker’ or a ‘guide’ may be too demanding for some entrepreneurs.

Micro-scale rural tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs in Estonia are often self-educated, without any specialist training in the service sector. The lack of professional preparation may actually make such businesses attractive – personalised hospitality experienced at somebody’s home or a small enterprise creates a different kind of intimacy hard to achieve in large hotels and

restaurants. At the same time the reputation of the small-scale entrepreneur depends on the quality of the service for which a certain degree of professionalism is required. Providing an experience for others – be it dining, watching forging in action or taking a smoke sauna – requires being amusing, knowledgeable, as well as skilful. The performance of cooking, forging or whipping a guest with a whisk in the sauna, must be done *for real*, not *as if*.

What is challenging for those who commodify rural culture for tourism consumption is the inevitable decline or disappearance of certain traditions in the Estonian countryside. Although traditions and heritage related to the rural past play an important role as resources for staging and performing experience services, they also incorporate new interpretations from the tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs. Elements from different traditions are combined with each other, traditions are updated or complemented by a modern touch. However, examining tourism and hospitality services also raised the question of how traditions and heritage may function as identity resources for entrepreneurs. All in all, the case studies demonstrate that the Estonian countryside has become increasingly a *hybrid space*. This concerns the ways cultural repertoires are used in tourism and hospitality services as well as the intermingling of rural and urban values and lifestyles.

David Crouch points out that the old rural identities strongly based on tradition, archetypes and continuity are constructed differently today: “Identities may be progressed or complicated in the process, repositioning the rural in the way lives are made significant and in terms of contemporary culture.” Embodied practices have an important role in this process “in refiguring the self and negotiating identity” (Crouch 2006: 361). The examined cases were all examples of new rural identities in comparison with traditional family farm based identities. Perhaps because of the rapid rural changes in Estonia and partly because of the entrepreneurs’ own background and values, *the ways cultural identities are expressed in services are rather heterogeneous*. Constructing new rural identities in the Estonian countryside has largely remained the entrepreneurs’ individual effort that may not be supported by the society (cf. Annist 2014).

My research revealed that most courageous and successful are those rural tourism or hospitality entrepreneurs who have a previous background working in an urban setting; as well as those who are good at maintaining their urban social networks alongside their rural networks. Several entrepreneurs were returning migrants or in-migrants bringing new ideas and practices to the community. The issue I did not deal with is how other community members have accepted these new ideas and practices and what kind of feelings new enterprises and entrepreneurs evoke among locals (cf. Brandth *et al.* 2013; Galani-Moutafi 2013). New services and new urban consumers in the countryside indicate to the process of gentrification not only in terms of upscaled settings but also in terms of the values that novel services promote.

While looking at the studied cases in retrospective, the issue of *the social and cultural sustainability* of tourism and hospitality entrepreneurship is raised. Tourism and hospitality businesses vivify rural life, bring consumers and their money to the countryside, and contribute to the local economy through networking; as a single entrepreneur can hardly act without collaborating at least to some extent with other entrepreneurs and local inhabitants. Performing experience services is certainly attractive to urbanities, but can performing these services solve the social and cultural problems of the Estonian countryside?

Such services may bring to the countryside knowledgeable urban consumers but if these consumers visit only a single enterprise, the contribution to the local economy may remain modest. Due to the micro-scale of the businesses and often very specific skills or knowledge needed for performing the services, most of the enterprises cannot provide additional jobs for rural dwellers. Furthermore, the supplementary income from performing experience services is not always sufficient for the enterprise, and in terms of income such services may remain a hobby or an expression of lifestyle, rather than a source of profit. For instance, services that provide a chance for experiencing traditional rural crafts may attract a relatively small number of visitors, as they are niche services. Two blacksmiths whose businesses I studied claimed that performing forging demonstrations or edutaining workshops for visitors turned out to be less popular than they had estimated.

Assessing the contribution of rural tourism enterprises to the development of rural areas in Estonia it is noticeable that staging and performing experience-evoking services has made entrepreneurs re-evaluate the cultural and natural resources. Several farmsteads that were in a state of disrepair have been renovated and farm buildings provided with new or additional functionality as restaurants, saunas, etc. As a result, tourism farms have created not just new rural representations but also new rural materialities – architecture, settings and landscapes. Rural material realities may vary from idyllic historical farmsteads with renovated buildings and carefully mowed lawns, to recently established “themed environments” (Gottdiener 2001) that use archaic looking materials and elements in modern architectural forms.

Considering the coherence of settings and services, they may not always be in harmonious relation – ambivalent experiences of rurality may emerge from the combinations of old storage buildings with gourmet cooking, or visiting a smoke sauna that accommodates thirty clients in the steam room. Perhaps for some tourists, performing various experience services may not compensate the lack of traditional farm activities of agriculture and husbandry, who for the urban client may still hold some nostalgic ideals of country life (cf. Woods 2011)?

Looking around the surroundings of rural tourism enterprises in Estonia – how does the overall context of rural landscapes and rural life contribute to the experiences one gets from the tourism services? The landmarks of Soviet heritage (e.g. ruins of kolkhoz buildings) and abandoned farmsteads with

collapsed roofs are unavoidable signs of contested and uncanny rural landscapes and may not be in harmony with the aim of promoting the Estonian countryside experience as an encounter with local traditions and unspoilt nature (as it is often depicted in tourism marketing materials) (cf. Kaur *et al.* 2004). There are likewise few ‘public stages’ in rural Estonia in which rural community’s everyday life could be performed, e.g. one can rarely visit village pubs, very common in many rural places in Europe (cf. Woods 2011).

Are performances of rural heritage in tourism enterprises coherent with their surroundings or is there something that cannot be hidden behind the ‘back-stage’? Perhaps these are the issues worth considering by those working out the development plans or making the rural tourism marketing strategies for Estonian rural tourism and require entrepreneurs to provide an added value of experience for the clients. Entrepreneurs’ personal creativity may not have its limits, but the material and experienced everyday context of rurality may have. Although it seems unfruitful to look for cultural coherence in the hybridised countryside the problem remains – what active commodification discourse has selected as valuable to sell to the tourists has to confront with what has been de-selected.

For instance, an Estonian travel guide *Holiday in the Countryside*<sup>51</sup> promises the international visitor a diversity of contrasting experiences. The cover photo of the catalogue represents a young man in a regional folk costume leaning towards an old storage or barn (both signs of cultural heritage) while speaking on a mobile phone and holding a laptop (signs of technological advancement and innovation). A cow, green grass and trees in the background display elements of the valuable cultural landscape of the Estonian countryside. The photo is staged as a kind of postmodern rural utopia which combines elements from the peasant past with current technological innovations. Thus, certain elements of rurality are moved to the ‘back-stage’, yet, they have not disappeared as a material reality.

In the introductory chapter I stressed that the modern countryside in Europe has become a ‘stage’ for different heritage production initiatives and performances. In the commodification process, *traditions and heritage are important both as economical as well as cultural identity resources*. When concerning performing traditions and heritage and providing an added value of experience, then small-scale rural tourism entrepreneurs have to compete with local community initiatives, organisations as well as institutions that are legitimatised to display the rural heritage (e.g. various types of museums) (cf. Jackson & Kidd 2011). Thus, the issue of performing traditions and heritage becomes inevitably a question of the politics of cultural (re)presentations in which institutional and popular practices become increasingly more equal in scale (cf. Aronsson & Gradén 2013). Performances in the rural tourism and

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<sup>51</sup> *Estonian Travel Guide: Holiday in the Countryside* (2009). Tallinn: MTÜ Eesti Maaturism [Estonian Rural Tourism Association].

hospitality business are expressions of an entrepreneur's individual as well as cultural creativity and, like theatre performances, involve also fictional and subjective interpretations. As individual cultural agents and due to the commercial nature of their business, entrepreneurs have the freedom to provide their own vernacular versions of the past in how they stage and perform their services. Therefore relying on 'experiential authenticity' (Di Domenico & Miller 2012) and 'performative authenticity' (Knudsen & Waade 2010) is legitimate as an alternative to institutionally approved displays.

However, my materials also demonstrate that even though being a performer in small tourism and hospitality settings may relate to a heightened reflexivity about one's performative and professional roles, it does not necessarily concern reflexivity about one's role as a 'culture broker' in the case of services using local traditional practices as a resource. *Micro-scale rural entrepreneurs' as culture brokers in tourism settings* could be a topic for further research and public discussions.

## **6.2. Performance perspective: Critical reflections and prospective for the future**

Some of the major shortcomings of the performance perspective used in this dissertation could be summarised as follows:

- 1) The focus was on the micro-scale – entrepreneur as a key director and performer, directorial aims and intentions, the way roles were enacted in services. In order to create a more holistic performance perspective the interaction with tourists/clients should also be involved in the data collection as well as analysis (e.g. comparison of entrepreneur's directorial aims and the clients' interpretations).
- 2) The analyses in articles were limited to single services as performances. In order to give the study more analytical weight, single performances should be further contextualised (e.g. at the local community level; at the municipality level; at the state level; at the EU level). For achieving a more complex analysis involving processes that happen at a macro-level, the single performance perspective has to be revised and not all performance elements can be studied in detail.

A micro-scale performance approach guided the analysis of particular events towards specific ethnographic accounts and understanding of particular poetics and staging principles of studied tourism and hospitality services. This is one way to apply a performance perspective and while looking to my work in retrospective I must admit that there are other possibilities how to make use of performance as a conceptual and analytical tool. Therefore it is appropriate to come back to a broader understanding of performance perspective in rural

studies – performance as a lens that enables to bring to light *the dynamics between individual and social production and reproduction of discourses and representations of rurality* (Woods 2010: 836 – my italics E.B.).

In this section I would like to extend a single performance centered framework towards ‘social scripts’ and ‘staging’ (or ‘producing’) meanings and values in society by institutions that generate and implement rural ideologies and policies influencing entrepreneurial practices. At the macro-level, commodification of rurality means (re)production of rural places and activities. Linking the concept of script to the staging of the latter relates to bringing stories into life through particular ways of producing, reproducing and marketing rurality in a tourism and hospitality context. Staging or producing is closely connected to the discourses and representations of rurality giving them particular material manifestations in terms of landscapes, houses, interiors, costumes, and embodied enactments.

One of the critiques of a Goffmanian dramaturgic approach in entrepreneurship studies has been that it is most suitable for making sense of micro-level aspects of entrepreneurship and may turn out to be insufficient for interpreting how the societal macro-level shapes entrepreneurial practices. Chris Steyaert suggests that a performative approach that takes into consideration the broader aspect of dialogue between the entrepreneurial practice and the society enables analysis of the dynamics between micro- and macro-levels, the ways social scripts are implied in certain discourses and power relationships, and the ways such scripts are considered, reconsidered or resisted in entrepreneurial performances (Steyaert 2003: 20). Social scripts are interdependent with individuals’ actions; in other words, entrepreneurs’ performances interpret certain social scripts in particular ways (Downing 2005).

Thus, considering the limits of the present study and a future prospective for research it must be admitted that performances of rurality are not only the outcome of individual entrepreneurial creativity but they are likewise shaped by socially produced scripts. The concept of the social script helps to clarify the difference between societal expectations and norms and individual actions and improvisations. If in performance theory ‘script’ is considered as “patterns of doing not modes of thinking” (Schechner 2002: 69) then in the context of rural entrepreneurship it seems useful to see the script as rather “a culturally shared expression, story or common line of argument, or an expected unfolding of events, that is deemed to be appropriate or to be expected in a particular socially defined context and that provides a rationale or justification for a particular issue or course of action.” (Vanclay & Enticott 2011: 260) The social script may affect a story, theme or structure of an event, but it also refers to ideologies and values that may guide rural entrepreneurs directorial choices and actions in a given society. As the examples in my studies demonstrate, entrepreneurs involved in the tourism and hospitality business may follow as well as challenge certain social scripts; such as how to live on a farm or what service is appropriate to provide in a rural setting.

Scripts can be expressed in various ways and created in a particular socio-cultural context by different social groups, often becoming the basis for identity and belonging both at an individual and group level. Hence, performances of rurality can also be considered acts of creating and expressing rural identities through particular practices done in specific settings (Edensor 2006: 484; Woods 2011: 201).<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, attempts to construct new rural identities can be a stimulus to mobilise the collaboration of various actors in rural development processes (Hannon & Curtin 2009: 125). Revitalisation of local traditions through performances of various kinds has become a significant part of re-discovering and re-establishing communities as well as creating *communitas*<sup>53</sup> in rural regions throughout Europe (see Larsen 2012; Mathisen 2009; Västrik & Vösu 2010). What the analysis of single performances may not explicitly reveal is who in these performances are not considered part of the community or which representations of local rural life are excluded from a particular performance (cf. Woods 2010: 213). Performing rural identities is not just about place branding and marketing, it is also about making sense of one's life in the changing rural environment.

There are many levels at which rurality may be produced and particular performances of rurality may be facilitated (e.g. the global tourism industry, the European Union and national rural policies, international and local media, etc.). Although entrepreneurs do not receive any detailed scripts for how to stage and perform a particular service, there are suggestions about what to sell and whom to target, provided by local tourism managers and marketing people as well as by officials who compose the guidelines for funding applications. Thus, entrepreneurs' individual choices and creativity of how to perform a service is shaped by multiple values expressed in varied social scripts, especially in rural policy and marketing discourses. Scripts may affirm or promote certain actions, practices and ways of rural life. Certain scripts may function normatively encouraging particular performances. For example, scripts articulated by transnational as well as local rural policies may include: *rural tourism that uses local heritage as a resource makes it easier for a region to compete at the tourism market or a rural enterprise should provide memorable and edutaining experiences of rural life.*

I did not explicitly treat the politics of performance in the papers included in this dissertation but it must be acknowledged that the political dimension of tourism and hospitality performances is inevitable if we want to examine the

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<sup>52</sup> We may also recognise distinct modes of communication used in varied rural performances: (a) auto-communicative, e.g. individuals' performances or collectively acted performances that are addressed to the community itself; (b) individual or collective performances that are addressed to somebody else, e.g. a tourism entrepreneur performing a service for the tourists or a village performing a heritage event for the visitors.

<sup>53</sup> *Communitas* is a term used by Victor Turner (1977). It refers to a group who temporarily wants to share the experience of solidarity, doing, celebrating something together. Often the feeling of *communitas* emerges in non-everyday occasions, such as festivals.

interaction of rural policies, marketing ideologies and entrepreneurs' actions. However, the challenge here is how to accept that performances are related to politics and yet not to assume that this is a monolithic power existing outside of the interactions or always repressive: "a critique of power in performance should also explore micro-processes, subtleties in interactions, and productively positive ways that power operates in performance to create selves and communities" (Bell 2008: 25). Performances of rurality in tourism and hospitality enterprises are outcomes of particular rural policies but they are likewise more than that, as I aim to demonstrate in my thesis.

There are multiple actors who perform rurality and multiple settings in which it can be performed. Performances of rurality at the individual level (e.g. such as enacted by tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs) are connected to the rural society at the collective level through traditions, conventions, norms and ideologies. Different versions of rurality that emerge from individual performances may be contributing as well as contradicting the collective understanding of what is rural or local (see Galani-Moutafi 2013). Further studies could lead us to explore in more detail particular representations of rurality communicated in tourism services as performances and how these representations relate to the surrounding rural space and lives?

I believe that the performance perspective on rural tourism and hospitality services can be complemented with a more thorough examination of entrepreneurial processes and lives, and the contribution of entrepreneurial activities to local culture and community. Implementing a performance perspective in practice should facilitate all the 'actors' and 'stage directors' of contemporary rurality (including policy makers and marketers) to critically reflect upon their role in the process of creating, deconstructing as well as destroying rural places and lives.

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## **ARTICLES**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Education:

2013 –... doctoral studies, department of ethnology, Institute for Cultural Research and Fine Arts, University of Tartu, (extern)  
2003 – 2008 doctoral studies, department of semiotics, Faculty of philosophy, University of Tartu  
2003 – *MA* in semiotics and culturology, University of Tartu (topic of the thesis: *Opera as a theatrical multimedial phenomenon: Directors' world in opera productions in 2002*, supervisor prof. Peeter Torop)  
2000 – BA in theatre research, University of Tartu  
1992 – Mart Reinik Gymnasium, Tartu

### Employment:

01.02.2008–31.12.2013 University of Tartu, Institute for Cultural Research and Fine Arts, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Ethnology, researcher  
01.01.2008–31.01.2008 University of Tartu, Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics, Department of Semiotics, extraordinary researcher  
01.07.2007–31.12.2007 University of Tartu, Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics, Department of Semiotics, extraordinary researcher (0.5)  
01.08.2007–31.12.2007 University of Tartu, Institute for Cultural Research and Fine Arts, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Ethnology, extraordinary researcher (0.5)  
01.09.2005–30.06.2007 University of Tartu, Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, Institute of Journalism, Communication and Information Studies, extraordinary researcher (0.5)  
01.01.2003–11.04.2005 University of Tartu, Institute of Philosophy and Semiotics, Department of Semiotics, librarian  
2003–2008 University of Tartu, Viljandi Cultural College, assistant lecturer

## **Creative work:**

- 2003 – dramaturge, director’s assistant, Gioachino Rossini “The Barber of Seville” (director: Liis Kolle; musical director: Mihkel Kütson), The Vanemuine Theatre, Tartu
- 2002 – dramaturge, director’s assistant, stage manager, Jaan Undusk “Goodbye, Vienna!” (director: Tõnu Lensment), The Tartu Theatre Lab

## **Publications:**

### **I. International research publications:**

- Bardone, Ester (2013). Strawberry Fields Forever? Foraging for the Changing Meaning of Wild Berries in Estonian Food Culture. *Ethnologia Europaea*, 43 (2), 30–46.
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- Võsu, Ester; Joosepson, Alo (2005). Staging National Identities in Contemporary Estonian Theatre and Film. *Sign Systems Studies*, 33.2, 425–472.

## II. Selected publications in Estonian:

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- Võsu, Ester (2005). Teatri ja looduse vahel [Between Theatre and Nature]. – Maran, T.; Tüür, K. (toim.). *Eesti looduskultuur*, Tartu: Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum, 179–218.

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2003–2008 doktoriõpe, semiootika osakond, filosoofiateaduskond, Tartu Ülikool  
2003 – *MA* semiootikas ja kulturoloogias, Tartu Ülikool (teema: “Ooper teatripärase multimeedialise nähtusena: lavastajamaailmad 2002. aasta ooperilavastustes”, juhendaja prof. Peeter Torop)  
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### Teenistuskäik:

01.02.2008–31.12.2013 Tartu Ülikool, Filosoofiateaduskond, Kultuuriteaduste ja kunstide instituut; etnoloogia osakond, teadur  
01.01.2008–31.01.2008 Tartu Ülikool, Filosoofiateaduskond, Filosoofia ja semiootika instituut, Semiootika osakond; erakorraline teadur  
01.07.2007–31.12.2007 Tartu Ülikool, Sotsiaal- ja haridusteaduskond, Semiootika osakond; erakorraline teadur (0.5)  
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01.09.2005–30.06.2007 Tartu Ülikool, Sotsiaal- ja haridusteaduskond, Aja- kirjanduse, kommunikatsiooni ja infoteaduste instituut, Aja- kirjanduse õppetool; Erakorraline teadur (0.5)  
01.01.2003–11.04.2005 Tartu Ülikool, Filosoofiateaduskond, Filosoofia ja semiootika instituut, Semiootika osakond; raamatukoguhoidja  
2003–2008 Tartu Ülikool, Tartu Ülikooli Viljandi Kultuuriakadeemia; õppeülesande täitja (töövõtulepinguga)

### Loometöö:

2003 – dramaturg, lavastaja assistant: Gioachino Rossini “Sevilla habemeajaja” (lavastaja: Liis Kolle; muusikajuht: Mihkel Kütson), teater Vanemuine, Tartu

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“Goodbye, Vienna!” (lavastaja: Tõnu Lensment), Tartu Teatri  
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### **I. Teadusartiklid rahvusvahelise levikuga väljaannetes:**

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- Võsu, Ester; Joosepson, Alo (2005). Staging National Identities in Contemporary Estonian Theatre and Film. *Sign Systems Studies*, 33.2, 425–472.

### **II. Valik eestikeelseid publikatsioone:**

- Bardone, Ester & Tamm, Epp (2013). Suitsusaunapärandi loomisest Võrumaal [The Processes of Smoke Sauna Heritage Production in Võru County]. – Runnel, Pille jt. (Toim.). *Eesti Rahva Muuseumi Aastaraamat 56*. Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 94–129.

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## DISSERTATIONES ETHNOLOGIAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

1. **Ene Kõresaar.** Memory and history in Estonian Post-Soviet life. Stories private and public, individual and collective from the perspective of biographical syncretism. Tartu, 2004. 299 p.
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3. **Людмила Ямурзина.** Обряды семейного цикла мари в контексте теории обрядов перехода. Тарту, 2011, 219 с.