

# “Find Your Nature” in the Swiss Alps In Search of a Better Life in the Mountains

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DOI: 10.21104/CL.2017.2.02

*Abstract* This paper reflects upon the nature/culture dichotomy while focusing on mountain landscapes understood as ideal places for a better life. Taking as example a region in the Swiss Alps, it analyses the motivations that lead mostly urban people to settle in mountain regions for the last three decades. Drawing on long-term multi-sited fieldworks in Swiss alpine villages, it highlights new forms of migration, not directly for economic reasons, as well as the representations of mountains as a trendy ‘culturalised’ natural place for living, especially for middle and upper urban classes. While giving voice to the research participants to understand the change in values and preferences towards mountain areas, this article enlightens the underlying factors behind amenity-led migration, lifestyle migration and multi-locality. It demonstrates how the nature/culture divide is being reshaped in the contemporary Swiss alpine context, where nature has become a cultural project.

*Keywords* Swiss Alps, representations, lifestyle migration, amenity migration, multi-locality.

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*Jak citovat / How to cite* Boscoboinik, Andrea – Cretton, Viviane. (2017). “Find your nature” in the Swiss Alps. In search of a better life in the mountains. *Český lid* 104, 199–212. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.21104/CL.2017.2.02>

## On Dichotomies

The nature and culture divide is a dichotomy so deeply rooted in Western thought that its longevity defies attempts to contradict it. Even though conceptions about the relationship between nature and culture have been changing throughout history, its distinctive character remains. Since the 17th century, this culture-nature dichotomy has placed human beings as ontologically distinct from nature. Nature offers a category of contrast against which human identity can be defined. This perspective proceeds from a dualistic conception separating culture and society on the one hand, and nature on another. At the beginning of the 21st century, the boundary between nature and culture was subject to constant readjustment and even to the global questioning of its philosophical foundations. Philippe Descola (2005), for instance, denies the universality of the nature and culture distinction. According to this author, the great division between the two is a quite recent phenomenon, which is culturally and historically contingent. Accordingly, he affirms the false universality of the nature and culture dichotomy and demonstrates its irrelevance in many societies.

However, in Western thought, nature and culture continue to be considered as two separate entities linked by a relationship that can sometimes be beneficial, sometimes pernicious: either a 'benevolent' society against a 'cruel' nature, or a 'malicious' society as opposed to a 'generous' nature. Nature has been and still is usually represented as wild, untamed and violent, threatening and destroying human lives, or as kind and pure, the quintessence of life. This depiction illustrates humans' deeply ambivalent relationship with nature, which oscillates between a romantic vision of nature and endeavours to domesticate it.

Mountains are a clear and appropriate example which illustrates both a romantic devotion and an attempt to conquer nature. In this article, we will focus on mountain landscapes understood as ideal places for a better life. Taking as an example a region in the Swiss Alps, we will analyse its recent transformation from a frightening wild space to the best place for living. Therefore, we will focus on the motivation which has led mostly urban people to settle in mountain regions over the last three decades. To do so, we will analyse new forms of migration, not directly for economic reasons, as well as the imaginary and representations of mountains as a 'culturalised' natural place for living. We are interested in the articulation of city and mountain through the representations of the people who have decided to settle in the Alps.

Mountains as opposed to valleys represent still another dichotomy associated with those of rural/urban, village/city, tradition/modernity, local/global, and centre/periphery, that mirrored classical evolutionary dichotomies such as Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* (1887) or Maine's *status/contract* (1861). Let us expand on the rural/urban dichotomy corresponding to the nature/

culture one. The romantic period idealised life in the rural milieu, challenging the long-standing negative representation of rural areas as places of hard work, poverty, isolation, boredom and backwardness. Modernity valued the progress and development associated with urban life, and rejected the traditional and conservative ways that typified rurality. In the traditional rural – urban dichotomy, urban space was considered to be the place of culture, of possibilities, progress, and modernity. Cities were simply the ‘place to be’, whereas rural space symbolized the natural crudeness of life and conservative behaviour. These perceptions influenced peoples’ migration from rural to urban settings. The city was a place of employment possibilities and was perceived as a potential source of contentment and personal development. However, the city was also a place of danger, violence and conflict, of impersonal and instrumental social relations.

Currently, for many urban dwellers, urban spaces have lost much of their attraction. After suffering a long pervasive negative image, except in the romantic period, urbanite perceptions began to transform to the extent that the countryside was slowly recast as a gentle, pure, and safe space. For those who come from urban spaces, rural environments evoke memories of an intangible mythical paradise. In recent years, the countryside has become an object in the quest for inner truth. Its stability and conservative values of identity are now positive qualities, and it is frequently perceived by urbanites as a place of authenticity, genuine products, and traditional values. Rural and mountainous spaces are then now represented as places that break with the constraints of the everyday urban world. Some urbanites do not see many advantages of living in the city, and consider it not only stressful but also a place where social relations are imbued with artificiality. The exodus reversed the direction of the traditional migration from rural to urban spaces: at present, some wealthy, urbanised people escape cities, either temporarily or permanently, to rural and mountainous locations.

### **Representations of Mountains: from Fear to Desire**

Since ancient times, mountains have been seen as foreboding, creating a fertile imagination in man. Myths about mountains have abounded over the centuries. They were often sacred, such as Mount Kaylas in Tibet and Mount Olympus in Greece which, in Greek mythology, was surrounded by mysterious regions inhabited by gods and monsters. Until the 18th century, mountains were dangerous areas which the traveller walked around, a world inhabited by strange people, often overwhelmed with terrible diseases. Mountains have been regions where outcast groups have hidden or promoted resistance against centralised power. However, from the 18th century, mountains became an object of fascination, which human beings have wanted to discover and

conquer. Mountains represent a challenge for man; mysterious, inaccessible, but at the same time a necessary passageway for people and merchandise.

It was the poem “Die Alpen” by Albrecht von Haller, published in 1729 and quickly translated into several European languages, which gave rise to a new positive and poetic vision of the mountain. The English travellers of the Grand Tour began to visit the Alps, and “Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse”, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, published in 1774, is considered the key work which revealed to Europe the beauty of the Alpine landscape. Thanks to these literary works as well as British expeditions, such as William Windham’s journey to Chamonix in 1741, the intellectual elites discovered the Alps. They described them as virgin and untamed nature, mountains both sublime and hideous, heavenly and fearful (Windham – Martel 1879).

It is after the emergence of this romantic sensitivity to the Alpine environment that mountains gradually opened up to tourism. This development was the fruit of the valorisation from the people living in the plains. Since 1950, there has been an increased urbanisation and transfer of urban culture to the Alps which, with the rise of mass tourism, has fundamentally altered the traditional image of the mountain.

Despite all the interest it has aroused, the mountain remains evasive in its definition and characterisation, both for geographers and for individuals, groups and institutions involved in its issues. If the work of early geographers was mostly descriptive and heavily biased towards physical environmental processes and conditions, research turned later to a growing recognition of socio-economic and political activities, as well as the place of history, culture, perceptions and attitudes in understanding changes in the mountain environment. As many authors recall, there have been several attempts to give a precise definition of what a mountain is (Funnell – Parish 2001: 3 and ff; Debarbieux 2001, among others). Although the debate is still in progress, there have been efforts to differentiate mountains by verticality: high, middle and low ranges; and by demography. High mountains have been characterised by high altitude, climatic extremes, limited vegetation cover, and a rugged landscape which is thinly populated. In contrast, middle altitude mountains are particularly apt for year-round living, adapted as they are for agriculture thanks to the mild climate. For outsiders the common image of middle-altitude mountains consists above all in traditional villages with picturesque architecture, of man in harmony with his environment, an indigenous welcoming population proud of its traditions, and of nature with hospitable forms. Therefore, this middle mountain environment is much more a cultural than natural space. It is a ‘culturalised’ natural environment for city-dwellers’ recreation.

Both the processes of the culturalisation and economic exploitation of natural landscapes are closely intertwined and mutually reinforced through the tourist industry. In this way, ‘nature’ becomes capital (Eimermann 2016).

Garrod, Wornell, and Youell (2006) proposed the concept of countryside capital to frame economic benefits for rural communities generated through sustainable use of the rural environment. This idea also includes, by extension, the nature or mountain capital that provides images to promote 'tourist destinations, activities and attractions for tourists and contributes to local traditions and customs that make a visitor's stay memorable' (Eimermann 2016: 57).

The Alps have gradually become a land of conquests and the playground of Europe, as the British liked to call them (see Stephen 1894). Therefore, what was once an exclusive space for everyday life has turned into a recreational space. The moderate altitude mountain now refers to a humanized space for leisure purposes, which has even become a place for the permanent habitat of originally urban dwellers.

The Alps, through their history and early tourist development, have developed into the archetype of tourist mountains. Mountain planning, not only for sports activities, but also natural parks, gardens or botanical tours, hiking and walking paths, places the mountain centre stage. The exploitation of thermal water centres and spas in mountain environments, for instance, also shows the domestication of nature through culture, and for cultural purposes.

### **Lifestyle Migration, Amenity Migration or Multi-Locality?**

Migration is a subject that has been widely studied in different disciplines, including geography, anthropology, and demography, in order to understand the processes and outcomes of human mobilities in all its manifestations. Specific migration processes have been observed in connection with new forms of housing and ways of life of certain strata of urban populations. The notions of amenity migration (Ullman 1954; Moss 2006) and lifestyle migration (Benson – O'Reilly 2016; 2009a; 2009b; Benson 2013) have been developed in order to understand new forms of migration which are distinct from forced migration due to war or political troubles. Both have taken into consideration perceptions of environmental quality and the valorisation of rural areas in terms of lifestyle choice. These new migrants do not migrate to escape poverty or difficult economic situations, and neither do they do so for political reasons, nor within the context of forced migration. Instead, these migrants are often from economically strong countries like those in Western Europe or the United States. They are themselves relatively affluent and affirm they are searching for a certain quality of life they say does not exist in their home countries. Therefore, amenity migration is defined as a 'movement of people to places, permanently or part time, principally because of the actual or perceived higher environmental quality and cultural differentiation of the destination' (Moss 2006: 19). The main features to determine such migration include landscape qualities such as quietness, natural environment, amount of sunshine, spectacular views, the possibility of outdoor activities,

as well as specific ethnic environments and foreign cultures (Moss 2006). This type of migration has often been motivated by a quest for ‘paradise on earth’ (Kuentzel – Mukundan 2005).

As a concept coming from geography, amenity migration gave priority to how migration variously intersects with rural development and transformation (Gosnell – Abrams 2009). In contrast, the notion of lifestyle migration, developed by the ethnographers Benson and O’Reilly (2016; 2009a; 2009b) focuses on people rather than places to point to the process of an identity-making project at the heart of the migration decision.

Lifestyle migration takes into consideration the meanings and representations that have ‘the power to shape reality because people act on them in the ways they live after migration’ (Benson – O’Reilly 2016: 29). For instance, Benson (2013) analysed how British people who had migrated to France (in Le Lot) in search of authenticity acted after migration in order to accomplish their dream: ‘to become part of the rural idyll, to achieve authenticity, migrants need to work at it’ (ibid: 509). Therefore, their everyday activities and practices within the destination are made to fit with the ideal they had before migrating.

Perlik (2006; 2011) questions the amenity concept because it does not differentiate between migration in the narrow sense (one fixed residential place) and periodic changes, in the sense of a multi-local residence. He mentions the need for distinguishing amenity-led migration from multi-local dwelling, as well as from tourism. Amenity-led migration should be restricted to those cases where people change their centre of everyday life for a constant period, but does not distinguish employed people from retired people, and the question of how long these people and families stay in their new environment remains unknown (Perlik 2011: 3). For this author, the phenomenon characterised as ‘amenity-led migration’ in Europe is often indeed a process of multi-local dwelling, that is, several residences which ultimately increase one’s professional opportunities, diversify one’s habitat, and adds variety to one’s leisure activities.

In Switzerland, a consensus is emerging among geographers concerning behavioural change in terms of housing: people do not have only one, but many homes simultaneously, in different places. This phenomenon is analysed in terms of seasonal or secondary residences, and in reference to ‘multi-locality’ (Perlik 2011; Duchêne-Lacroix et al. 2013; Hilti 2009). ‘By their multilocality people connect different meaningful places and build up individual meaningful arrangements’ (Hilti 2009: 148). For Perlik (2011), multi-locality is a new type of residential migration, with long-distance commuters travelling and temporarily escaping from the cities to resort locations. Multi-locality also includes new forms of mobile work, second homes in attractive tourist areas, and residences in quiet areas. Efficient transportation services and accessibility have contributed to ever more people opting for multi-locality with

dwellings in the city *and* in the mountains (Messerli – Scheurer – Veit 2011: 4). The city as the ‘cultural’, erected against nature, and the mountains as the ‘natural’ place to live.

Whereas some urbanites decide to run away from the ‘un-natural’, ‘in-authentic’ city and repopulate the countryside, others take a less drastic decision and rather than definitively leaving the city or having more than one residence, they choose to spend their leisure time in ‘natural’ and ‘authentic’ landscapes, while keeping only one home in the city. This can be described as ‘open’ tourism, understood as leisure activities that are not related to a specific address or destination, which can periodically change. In this context, urbanites search for more and more outdoor activities, rural authenticity, natural landscapes, local foods (*produits du terroir*, *Slow Food*), distinction through leisure experiences, and exotic accommodation such as ‘glamping’ (glamorous camping) (Boscoboinik – Bourquard 2012). In brief, many urbanites search for all that cities cannot offer when planning their long or short holidays, where the image of the idyllic countryside reveals itself as a potent antidote against the many ills of the city, making such travel valuable even for a weekend.

### **Living in the Swiss Alps**

In order to understand these new mobilities and the search for a better quality of life, we analysed sources from different research conducted by the two authors. Viviane Cretton led research in 2011 on identity reconstruction of people from diverse origins who had settled in the Western part of the Swiss Alps (Cretton – Amrein – Fellay 2012). Twenty-five life stories were collected from men and women who had migrated ten, twenty or thirty years ago to the specific Alpine location under study (Valais). Participants were asked to talk about their reasons for leaving their home country and their motivation to stay in Switzerland. Andrea Boscoboinik and a team of students, with the collaboration of CREPA (*Centre Régional d’Etudes des Populations Alpines*) conducted interviews in Verbier, a village which in the 20th century quickly developed from a rural hamlet into a fashionable tourist resort. During field visits between 2012 and 2014, open-ended interviews and informal discussions were held with a diverse set of locals, as well as with French and English nationals living in Verbier. Our discussions pivoted around our discussants’ perceptions and representations of living by the mountain, and their reasons for this choice. Mainly, we wanted to know the advantages of the places where they had chosen to live. While we were in the region, we also collected academic literature, television documentaries, and archival material from local institutions.

Both pieces of research were conducted in Valais, a mountainous region well known as a centre of tourism in south-west Switzerland. The Valais canton boasts tourist attractions, particularly winter ski resorts, attractive natural

landscapes for trekking in the summer, and thermal baths resorts frequented year round. The image of naturalness, mountains, and authenticity is central in the marketing of Valais and Switzerland in general. Switzerland's national slogan for tourism on the official website of the Swiss National Tourist Office, [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com), is '*Get natural*'. Most pictures and publicity material are based on landscapes, thus inviting the visitors to experience nature. Natural landscapes sell well. In 2017, the videos broadcast to promote Switzerland associate nature with happiness and beauty. Landscapes are described as 'idyllic', 'spectacular and delightful', a supply of happiness. Similarly, the Swiss people are depicted in these words: they 'like to take their time', they 'do take care of each other', they 'live in a splendid nature... splendid *non-spoiled*, I must say'.<sup>1</sup> Similar to the 19th century romantic representations of nature as a source of inspiration, the beginning of the 21st century reshapes representations of nature as a revitalising source while turning it into a business project.

The marketing efforts of Valais fit into the wider national project of promoting natural landscapes as national heritage that simultaneously reflects Valais' local cultural values. Indeed, in recent years, outsiders have initiated several projects – tourism, real estate, or even artistic – in the Valais region. For example, the co-founder of a luxury business project in the hotel industry (*Montagne Alternative*) uses nature capital to attract guests with the advertising slogan: '*Find your nature in the Swiss Alps*'. It provides customers with ways of 'connecting with nature' to 'develop self-awareness', or to 'become a conscious actor in creating a better world'.<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of fact, various features associated with 'nature' were referred to by many of our research participants, either as a reason for migration or as a reason for staying after migrating. The advantages they mentioned could be summarised as the notion of a better quality of life (Benson – O'Reilly 2009a; 2009b). 'Quality of life' is linked here to the physical and social environment, to social and political stability, to the climate, to 'quietness', to the 'natural' mountain conditions for skiing or climbing, but also to economic arguments concerning the money they earn or to the living standard in Switzerland. Here the environment intersects with at least two definitions: (1) a cultural landscape and (2) a system of settings within which systems of activities take place.

Living in the Swiss Alps can offer the possibility of alternate indoor and outdoor activities during the working day, from working in the office in the morning to skiing during lunch time for example, in order to better fit with the conviction of 'living in nature'. The latter is conceived as a privileged way

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1 <http://www.myswitzerland.com/en-ch/grand-tour-of-switzerland.html>, viewed the 9th February 2017.

2 <http://www.montagne-alternative.com/en/about-us/our-concept>, viewed the 9th February 2017.

of life. As an illustration, this highly qualified woman, who settled down in the Alps after living in Berlin, explained:

*"I wanted to be close to a skiing location, and I live just three minutes from the ski cabins. So when I talk to my friends, you know when I wanna go to ski, I just look through the window if the weather is good and I tell my secretaries: 'Listen, move my appointments to 1 p.m. today and I will go skiing from 9 to 12' Who else can do this?"* (Woman, native from Germany, medical doctor, settled in the Alpine valley of Entremont, July 2011).

Benson and O'Reilly (2016) have shown that 'destinations are often valued because of the contrast they offer to what was left behind, their natural and cultural environments significant because of what these offer by way of improving quality of life' (ibid: 22). They also offer a class distinction and social privileges. It is not only a better quality of life, but also an enhanced identity project. Therefore, this new way of representing and considering mountain areas as a place to live 'in nature' is not only a social fact, it is a very specific social class construction.

Most of the time, the meaning of a 'better way of life' refers to the Alpine environment that differs significantly from the one in the city: the air is more pure, less polluted; nature is more accessible, closer; the Alpine village is less populated than the city, with less traffic and thus offering a more relaxing and healthy way of life. Those imaginaries of the Alpine environment and Alpine villages contrast with the pressures induced by the neoliberal order.

Most representations of the 'quality of life' in the Alps are depicted in terms of living in or close to nature. Nevertheless, the ideal of wild mountains is often contradicted by the power of urbanisation, inseparable from the consequences of a growth in tourism and mobility: asphalt roads, roundabouts, housing projects, infrastructures, supermarkets and upmarket clubs.

As an interlocutor from Australia states:

*'Quite often people come to these locations [Switzerland] in search of beauty and to see the small 'Heidi' chalets, that is the image we have. That was the image of Switzerland I had before coming to Switzerland; it was the flowers, the chalets, and then now, it is quite unlike this!'* (Woman, a native of Australia, settled in Bagnes, July 2011).

In contrast, for other respondents, their representation of the 'quality of life' is in terms of living in or close to nature:

*'Here [compared to Holland], we have nature around us. I am not a great mountaineer but I like to walk, I like to ski, everything off road, wilderness, I enjoy this very much!'* (Woman, native of the Netherlands, settled in Trient Valley, former communication manager, July 2011).

The idea of living in nature that we collected from interviews varies depending on the sociocultural and economic backgrounds of the interlocutors. One woman from Mauritius who settled in the Alps following her Swiss husband thirty years ago stated:

*'Me, I had to care for the cows when I arrived, but I knew nothing about them. During the whole winter, and here winter goes on for seven to eight months [laughs], so every morning at four o'clock, waking up.'* (Woman, native of Mauritius, settled in Bagnes, July 2011)

Living on a farm in the mountains and waking up at four in the morning to look after the cattle in the winter is different from going up a mountain to ski during lunchtime when the weather is good. The fantasy surrounding the lifestyle in mountain areas (a way to live in nature) is then a social class construction.

Since 1960, the tourist boom transformed nature into landscapes for urban citizens (Bourdieu 1977: 4; Kilani 1984). In 2017, the idea of living in a natural environment conveys a large spectrum of social and urban imaginary that entails a healthy way of life, like eating organic food, but also a slower rhythm of life, more balanced, more fun and more ecological. Now nature depicts a kind of spiritual garden for city dwellers or expatriate business people. Some locations in mountain areas have been reinvented for and by urbanites who consume the natural environment as much as they contribute to urbanising the Alpine region.

That is the case of several ski stations in Switzerland, which built up their international renown as locations attached to the city world. For example, Verbier in Valais, located less than two hours by train or car from Geneva airport (and even closer to other Swiss urban centres), concentrates on long-distance commuting and the multi-locality way of life. It is not unusual nowadays to work in the urban centres and live in the mountains, both linked via commuting (Perlik 2011).

Some other interlocutors have chosen to settle in Verbier and stop commuting. An Englishman explained he wanted to live somewhere in the mountains. He first went to France where his car wheels were stolen. This experience, together with other administrative difficulties, made him decide on *'a quiet place to live in, without crime, without violence. I wanted a place to develop business, with clear regulations, without corruption. I wanted a sunny place with nice views, a small resort with friendly people'*. (Man, native of England, settled in Verbier, September 2014).

Residential migration is then a rational decision by individuals, based on an appreciation of the quality of places and an understanding of an ideal life that their financial situation makes attainable. These migrants often mention the enjoyable aspects of both the natural and social environment as a reason for migration, making their choices fit into the amenity migration matrix. Even when mountain villages undergo urbanisation, their relatively low demographic density, activities, life rhythm, and environment contrast with medium or large cities.

Many people coming to or settling in Verbier stress the 'quiet' component. Here, 'quiet' does not mean that nothing happens, because night-life in Verbier

during the high tourist season is eventful and is one important aspect attracting young people. Instead, ‘quiet’ may be translated as ‘secure’ or as a ‘do not disturb’ character. Many promoters say that the *quiet* aspect of Verbier is important for making Verbier attractive to celebrities who visit it regularly and know they are not going to be harassed. As one promoter explained, ‘*People come here for its outstanding ski area, beautiful sunny slopes, ultra-trendy bars, hyper-luxury chalets, for big parties, for shopping, for meeting people, and for being seen*’. (Man, native of Verbier, working in tourism, September 2014).

Life trajectories are manifold, but several follow a similar pattern. Young women and men come for one or more seasons to devote themselves completely to skiing, or come for skiing and generally work in tourist-related activities, and then settle in the town permanently after a few years. When settled, they continue their skiing and tourist activities, or work at home on a part-time basis. Some people who have settled in Verbier work for a local, regional, or even an international market. Their jobs are often related to trade, business, management, consultancy, bars, hotels, or the media. It is clear that today, mountains like the Alps, where agriculture once predominated, may be transformed to be enjoyed for other purposes. The economy in this area is not a rural economy, but rather has integrated the demands of urban consumption and ways of living.

People who visit or settle in Verbier are part of a higher social class, or at least expect to be considered as such, and consequently require amenities and all kinds of high-quality services. Distinction is a leitmotiv in this context. New trends in shopping, rent possibilities, and chalet acquisition are developing constantly. As a result, prices are rising, creating difficulties for native residents to stay there or to keep a family-inherited chalet. Therefore, Verbier represents a clear case of gentrification. This is the process by which former peripheral regions become wealthier neighbourhoods, and is typically the result of an increased interest in a certain environment. In our case, it can be close to ‘greentrification’, as the interest is focused on a natural environment, although not necessarily with ecological aims. Newcomers have increased the population and replaced the local inhabitants, who are migrating out. They modify the natural environment and influence the local culture.

## Conclusion

Amenity-led migration, lifestyle migration and multi-locality, interpreted as a change in values and preferences towards rural areas, refer to the mobility of urban middle and upper classes who have moved to rural locations in search of quietness and an improved quality of life. However, these new migrants remain urban both in their jobs and in their ways of consumption and behaviour. It is possible to identify some socio-economic factors that facilitate this amenity-led migration: increased mobility, with a dissociation between work

activity and a fixed workplace; income from different economic activities; and a global societal shift in values and preferences (Perlik 2011). Consequently, the once contrasted dichotomy of a productive metropolis and a consumptive leisure landscape is no longer polarised.

The discovery of new natural locations for temporary or permanent residence by trend-sensitive middle and upper urban classes transforms these natural spaces. Upper-class urbanites that do not want to compromise their level of lifestyle comfort export their way of life wherever they go. The natural landscape is being covered by buildings, and small villages become semi-urban, benefiting from a level of infrastructure that until recently could only be found in cities.

The images of living in nature that are described in this article are behind migration motivation, but lifestyle migrants work in and modify the place where they migrate in order to ensure that the environment fits the idyllic model that originally attracted them (Richard 2010; Benson 2013; Tommasi 2014). In turn, the nature in the Alps appears as an urban ideology that disseminates various utopian representations of Swiss landscapes (wonderful, fortunate, relaxing, quiet, beautiful, preserved) which contradict the reality of Alpine practices today (busy commuting, building construction, driving, and working).

The desire to live in or close to nature appears nowadays as the privilege of an 'outside' social class (mainly urban, not native highlanders). The wish to live in the nature can be understood as a cultural lifestyle where nature becomes a cultural project, or an attachment to a cultural world. With the urbanisation of former natural environments, the culture–nature divide becomes increasingly blurred, echoing the blurring of the traditional rural–urban dichotomy.

April 2017

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### **„Najděte si svou přírodu“ ve švýcarských Alpách Hledání lepšího života v horách**

Tato práce se zamýšlí nad dichotomií příroda/kultura se zaměřením na horskou krajinu, která je chápána jako ideální místo pro život. Bere si za příklad region ve švýcarských Alpách a analyzuje motivaci povětšinou městských obyvatel k tomu, aby se během posledních tří desetiletí usazovali v horských regionech. V návaznosti na dlouhodobé mnohostranné terénní práce v švýcarskoalpských vesnicích se tento článek zaměřuje na nové formy migrace nepodníčené přímo ekonomickými důvody a také na zobrazování hor jako módního „zkulturněného“ přírodního místa pro život, především pro střední a vyšší městské třídy. Díky prostoru věnovanému účastníkům výzkumu lze porozumět jejich posunu hodnot i jejich preferenci horských oblastí, tento článek však také osvětluje skryté faktory stojící za migrací motivovanou výhodami okolí, životním stylem a rozmanitostí lokality. Ukazuje, jak je rozdělení na přírodu/kulturu přetvářeno ve švýcarskoalpském kontextu, kde se příroda stala i kulturním projektem.