Rural putsch: power, class, social relations and change in the English rural village.

Key words

Rural; social class; time; elite; politics; ethnography.

Abstract

The paper uses ethnography to discuss a political putsch – a move from Old Guard to newcomer dominance – in an English rural village. Applying the conceptual ideas of Goffman on symbols of class status and Thrift (2012) on space and an expressive infrastructure, it responds to Shucksmith's (2012) call for research into the micro workings and consequences of class power in rural contexts. The analysis stresses the relevance of 'sticky' space (the residue of past social relations shaping the present, the dwindling amenities and a contemporary absence of pavements) and a contemporary blurring of rural and the urban identities (Norfolk/ London). Moreover, both Goffman's restrictive devices and class symbols (who garners support and who does not) and the temporal dimension of an expressive infrastructure (informing individual dispositions and orientations – class affect) now construct rural spaces. The paper therefore retains a flavour of sociology's obstinate interest in geographic milieu, but the stage is now one of a global countryside both influencing and influenced by local politics and elites.

A global recession alongside the rural penalty has meant that not all spaces or agents are equal and some are therefore better placed to adapt, accommodate or resist change (Shucksmith 2012). In a climate of various rural crises (fracking in the 'desolate' North of England[i] and the contentious badger cull), this paper uses ethnography to study the operation of rural micro-politics and by doing so highlight the value of an ethnographic approach for sociology for understanding the local in the global.

Introduction

> The individual stakes out a self, comments on his [sic] having done so, and comments on his commenting, even while the others are taking the whole process into consideration in coming to their assessments of him, which consideration he then takes into consideration in revising his view of himself […] [this is] the serious ethnographic task of assembling the various ways in which the individual is treated and treats others, and deducing what is implied about him through this treatment (Goffman 1969:361).

The sociological study of rural inequalities, in the early rural community studies literature, conflated local hierarchies with class:

> When I then went to [study] Gosforth [in Cumbria], I regarded myself as going to a foreign country, and when I got off the bus in Gosforth, […] there was a woman coming down the road, on a white horse, and she stopped outside the shop – Barnes's shop – and Mr Barnes came out and actually touched his forehead, and said, 'Good Morning, Miss Keene' […] I discovered that Miss Keene was actually the Rector's daughter, and the Rector's daughter clearly belonged to a different social class from Mr. Barnes. And I thought, 'Here is the English class system in action!' (Laughs) (Williams 2008:97-98).

From a broader perspective, sociologists of elites linked 'social differentiation and political hierarchy,' but also recognised 'the very plurality of elites, their social influence and their closed or open character and identity and personhood' (Bottomore 1964:16: Scott 1991: Hearn 2012). Yet despite rising inequalities and the progressive concentration of wealth (Freeland 2012), Shucksmith's keynote address to the 2011 European Society for Rural Sociology conference argued class analysis had been neglected and called for research exploring the relationship between class, power and inequality (Shucksmith 2012). The British Sociological Association's (BSA) own 60th Anniversary Conference plenary on class showcased how its operation has become more complex and insidious, latter summarised by Payne (2011). Conference speakers Platt, Savage, Skeggs and Scott reflected on the situation past and present.

Platt (2011) reminded us that the great Marxist sociologist, Tom Bottomore, perceived class to be 'going away' in the nineteen fifties, yet her own work on the seminal affluent worker study (cf. Goldthorpe et al. 1967) initially sought out distinctions *between* the classes. Subsequent speaker Savage summarised this as attempting to make the implicit, explicit and argued that the core difference between now and then is the way of coming at the problem (of class analysis). This, the next speaker Skeggs, explicated as the analysis of both the relational and political. Pre-sociology, Savage (2011) argued, an opaque form of class operated and Skeggs (2011) applied the metaphor of ghosts that

inform current work. The task for her and re-iterated in her address in 2014 to the International

Sociological Association annual meeting, is to open this up as what is of value to capital – what has

become capitalised/ of value in the moral economy? Class identity here is understood as a resource

that can be used, but only those able to access it. For Skeggs, it therefore becomes a problem of self

and how we understand value and of doing value differently and in 2014 argued that the very the

language of analytic capital has pervaded social theory through the very ubiquity of the market and

'god-like' character of new algorithms. Scott (2011), as the final speaker at the 2011 plenary, stressed

too the importance of the value of property value (long highlighted in rural analyses such as Newby et

al. 1978) and critised the lack of research upon elites. In his overview, Payne (2011) celebrated class

analysis' ability to see both large-scale features and the person. Hence class inequalities continue to

merit exploration at the micro, person-level of social relations today – and the rural is an important site

for their further exploration (Shucksmith 2012, Newby 2008, Skeggs and Loveday 2012). As

contemporary rural scholars have argued, it is the interaction between space, materialism and

relationism.

Newby (2008) recently noted of rural studies that we simply do not have the same scale of empirical

data about rural areas and their communities that was once the case. It is this and Shucksmith's (2012)

call to arms for a renaissance in social class analysis at the micro level of analysis that inform the

ambitions of this paper. Whilst the study of elites is a marginal field in sociology compared to research

on the disenfranchised, the recession has been more acutely felt in rural areas and the question to what

extent 'does place itself give rise to inequality?' is a key research agenda facing rural researchers

(Shucksmith 2012:384). Whilst rural folk may no longer touch their forelock to the gentry,

ethnography can yield insight into how potential inequalities operate now and the very plurality of

elites across established axis of inequality such as class, politics and power. We need to understand

how people are assembled, assessed and treated (cf. Goffman 1969) and in specifically rural locales.

The paper now offers a brief overview of relevant key arguments within both sociology and rural

studies, with special attention upon understanding rural elite change vis-à-vis social class. These ideas

are then applied to ethnographic data capturing the aftermath of a bloodless coup that marked the

political transition from the dominance of a farming-orientated group to a new axis that contained

diverse villagers both new and established in one rural village in the East of England. This putsch, its history and context, is the focus of this paper.

Social class and the sociology of elites.

The study of the operation of power and influence – of elites – is empirically possible, as 'the concept of elites […] refers to an observable social phenomenon and takes its place in theories which seek to explain social happenings, especially political changes' (Bottomore 1964:14). Freeland (2012) points out that the truly global elite – the plutocrats – are most accurately described as the top 0.1% by wealth. Obviously, this minority of HNWI is not the scope here, but rather the focus is upon Bottomore's 'social happenings' in a more modest context. Savage et al. (2005) invited others to follow their study of the middle classes of Manchester with a comparative investigation and Crow (2010:228) pondered whether the middle-class terminology ('you are where you live') that suited that context would be hold for a working-class community. Similarly, social class analysis itself in UK sociology is now in renaissance. Ethnographic explorations can now draw upon the new typology of British class categorisation showcased at the 2013 BSA conference (Savage et al. 2013). Savage et al. (2005), and the Manchester School more broadly, has been instrumental in deconstructing class and identity. For example, Devine et al. (2005) highlight the usefulness of Bourdieu's work in overcoming traditional preoccupations with stratification and quantitative analyses. This echoes the interest in relational/ spatial/ material interesting interests in rural studies, and sociological studies of class have moved to explore the interactional workings of class – studying what people actually do via ethnography, rather than what they say they do in interview (Atkinson 2014). Within Savage and his team's work there is more than a flavour of Pahl's (1965) seminal work in a concern to look less to occupational backgrounds than residential processes. That is, seeing beyond occupational determinism to explore identity and agency in a global context that is both contingent upon and serves to shape the space around it.

This move to understand that identities in mobile times are simply less dependent upon face-to-face interaction is provocative because it demands that the very status and meaning of place is re-considered. Savage et al. (2005) used the notion of 'elective belonging' to capture how people feel about where they live and the people living there. Elective belonging further places a greater value upon landscape

or physical attributes of a locale, above the social relations found there and hence replaces the traditional insider-outsider dualism (Pahl's (1968:265) 'vulgar Tönniesism'). As a concept, it succeeds in injecting a global dimension into analyses of community whilst keeping the 'obstinacy' of sociological interest in place alive (Savage et al. 2005:1). It does so by recognising the plurality of motives underpinning people's engagement with their locale here echoes the mobilities literature's highlighting of how social actors 'do' space. This holds that 'Bodies sense and make sense of the world as they move bodily in and through it, creating discursively mediated sensescapes that signify social taste and distinction, ideology and meaning' (Buscher and Urry 2009:102). The metaphor of performance or dramaturgy (Buscher and Urry cite Goffman here) has already featured in rural analyses, both places and the people on that stage are performative (Edensor 2006). Class and taste signifiers flow throughout the built environment, the activities pursued and the consumptive style adopted. As one rural ethnography noted in a study of social-class:

> You say about a new squirearchy, it is the classic example. There is one person, who I actually get on really well with, he wears plus fours and the tweed jacket and boots; the whole kit and caboodle. He's a smashing chap and everything, but when he turns up in the pub after a shoot in the plus fours and tweeds I feel embarrassed and so do some of the others. I am not taking the piss, but who does he think he is? The Duke of Bedford? (Heley 2010:326).

The salience of signs and symbols acknowledges that identities no longer flow purely from the occupational communities nor face-to-face conduct and this returns to prime micro-sociological territories of class signs and symbols and their assembly. Skeggs and Loveday's (2012) analysis of working class values and the symbolic violence of the respect agenda similarly demands that class be understood in all of its complexity:

> we want to propose a more general model of 'person-value' which may include the capitals described by Bourdieu but also thinks beyond an accrual-acquisition property model to include the excluded and their social values, action and affect […] as a more general ethos for living, for sociality, and connecting to others, through dispositions, practices and orientations […] in effect a different political ontology (Skeggs and Loveday 2012:476).

The analysis of class at the micro level therefore needs to apply established techniques with new empirical strategies and theoretical ideas to understand the acquisition and implication of the 'restrictive devices' surrounding class identities (Goffman 1951:297). Ethnography is well-positioned to study these social processes:

> By immersing themselves in the fleeting, multi-sensory, distributed, mobile and multiple, yet local, practical and ordered making of social and material realities, researchers gain an understanding of movement not as governed by rules, but as methodologically generative (Buscher and Urry 2009:103-104).

Buscher and Urry (2009) description of 'tracking' people, objects, information and these are useful principles to apply to explore and understand the dynamic of political change in a village. Intellectually, these are diverse theoretical ideas that reach across literatures that are extensive and it is impossible to do justice to the richness of the entire literature here. nevertheless, they add a mindfulness towards the actor-hood of non-human entities to the traditional ethnographic orientation of *verstehen* (Pole and Hillyard forthcoming). Collectively, dramaturgy, elective belonging, mobilities, object and affect turns are all united by a concern with class, power and politics:

> To recognize the contribution of things like buildings and food to the enactment of politics (and morality) is to radically widen the range of entities that count as participants in political and moral life (Marres 2012:108).

Sociological innovations in the study of social class identities remain in-progress. Class, as a foundational concept of British sociology (Colin Lacey[ii] once equating class with chips – it comes with everything) has done more than retain its relevance by continuing to speak to some of the complex theoretical innovations of twenty-first century sociology. This is not inevitably beyond Bourdieu (cf. Payne 2011), but can include Marres' (2012) work on the 'coming out' of things and Thrift's work on space. The paper now examines specific literatures on rurality and class before applying these concepts to the ethnographic case study. Is the emperor now clothed and sociological theory has now caught up with rural studies (Pahl 1989) or has 'the post-Pahl hangover' of the dismissal of the explanatory power of geographic milieu endured (Cloke and Thrift 1987:328)?

Class inequalities in the rural context.

The territories of rural studies are now very different to those found by Williams (2008) in the nineteen fifties context cited earlier and the rural-urban dualism is long dismissed:

> Major social change [in the countryside] involves the gradual absorption of rural life into the mainstream of English society as a whole. The autonomy and distinctiveness of rural life have gradually but progressively been eclipsed by nationally inspired social, economic and political developments. This has not only narrowed the gap between 'rural' and 'urban' life-styles, but has made it increasingly difficult to understand recent discontinuities in rural life by examining only the indigenous sources of social change (Newby 1979:273).

Krause (2013:234) goes further, suggesting that the rural and urban are mutually influencing, rather than the more popular imposition of an urban lens onto the rural: 'If the city really is endless, as is claimed, […] it is also the countryside. If the whole world is urbanizing, it must also be ruralizing.' This, she views, demands theoretically-informed empirical research, for 'as we link the description of place to theory, the relationship of specific forms of settlement to capitalist development […] needs to be examined rather than assumed' (Krause 2013:244). Capitalist development, as Newby et al. (1978) note, is informed by both local and global circumstances. Explanatory power is not just to be found in a locale, but the wider situation of that locale.

Despite this acknowledgement, Shucksmith's (2012) overview of the literature finds little sustained work on rural class analysis since Cloke's (1990) ESRC-funded study of four rural villages. Their comparative case study approach maximised opportunities for comparison and contrast and revealed intra-class conflict (within the middle class) as much as inter-class conflict (between the working and middle classes). This rejected the equation of newcomer with the middle-class and of local with the working classes in favour of a new axis incorporating: property, environmentalism, labour, agriculture and political power (Cloke and Thrift 1987). This parallels Savage's and also Newby's work and avoided the wrath of Pahl by not attaching significance to geographic milieu and suggested that 'rurality represents a facade, shaping local variations in the impact of structural changes but not causing those changes to occur *per se*' (Cloke and Thrift 1987:321). The question remains to what extent social actors retain any sense of autonomy, for example, of the kind Goffman granted the interaction order[iii]. That is, are they positioned in an influential way within that interaction order and what stickiness, or residue, from wider society penetrates that façade'?

Further literature analysing the operation of class *inside* rural spaces argued that middle class ideologies were constructed once there, rather than parachuted in, ready-made (again, not dissimilar to the concept of elective belonging) (Murdoch 1995). Agents operate through their networks to further their own interests (such as in terms of class and gender) once inside a rural space, but the spatial formations there are both also underpinned by, and a consolidation of, those actions (Murdoch 1995). Murdoch's work is influenced by an actor-network theory model, with an emphasis placed upon: governance, institutions and public funding; entrepreneurial character; the economic infrastructure;

cultural tradition and ritual; infrastructure and location; who's there (demography) and; social relations in the round. Finally, Shucksmith (2012) highlighted Phillips' application of the urban notion of gentrification to rural areas. For example, the cultural consumption and 'classed commodities' of rural representations appearing in popular media, included material representations (of bucolic landscapes) and goods (Range Rovers) (Phillips et al. 2001:18). Such manifestations of class differences is through consumptive practices must too acknowledge Skeggs and Loveday's recognition of the symbolic violence it can entail. As they argue, it calls for a different political ideology. Collectively, these theoretical directions within rural studies appreciate that the rural as a 'sticky space' that is both influenced by and itself influencing and riven with power:

> Place, then, is inextricably bound up with class, power and inequality. The social construction of place is necessarily class-infused, in a Bourdieuvian sense, as are place-based rural development actions. In turn, class formation itself is bound up with place, in so far as place is implicated in the contested and fluid process of discursive construction, identity formation, mobilisation and struggle based around habitus, field and capital (Shucksmith 2012:387).

Shucksmith (2012) captures a profound theoretical transformation within rural studies, from a state when 'the subject had [once] been significantly retarded and marginalized by the post-war (agricultural) modernization project' (Marsden 2006:3). The model is now of a global countryside and where most recent rural theorising looks to explore and explain inequalities via understanding of: the working locale's unique characteristics, the social agents found there and the networks in play. This is a significant, but cumulative theoretical transition. That is, as Pahl saved Tönnies' work from simplistic readings (community associations rather being present in both *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* societies), more latterly Cloke and Thrift rescued Pahl's 'urbs in rure' study in Hertfordshire from a similar misappropriation. Hence, 'Pahl was not exposing a *unitary* middle class impact' but rather [that] zoning, choice and social class are the new dynamics (Cloke and Thrift 1987: 321, original emphasis). Coming full circle, this understanding of Pahl's work sits well with Savage et al.'s notion of 'elective belonging' (where space becomes almost more important than the people) and dismisses earlier work's emphasis upon length of residence as a means to exclude. For contemporary rural newcomers, it has become an irrelevance.

This fecundity of theorising merits empirical translation as, for Shucksmith, fundamental questions remain:

regarding the autonomy of local actors, the distribution of local power, and inequality more generally. Research revealed that endogenous and neo-endogenous approaches risk exacerbating inequality, both between places because of the uneven capacity of local place-based communities to prosecute endogenous development […] and within communities because internal power relations are ignored or obscured (Shucksmith 2012:385).

Bourdieu here, as in other sub-disciplines within sociology, has become an important touchstone, but the better known analyst of the interactional manifestation of power relations is Goffman. Acknowledged by Bourdieu to offer a sociology that lays bare the 'subtlest, most fugitive indices of social action' (Bourdieu 1983:113), Goffman's earliest work included an analysis of symbols of class status and residential fieldwork in a remote Shetland community (Goffman 1951, 1959). Whilst not as orientated to moments outside co-presence as Bourdieu, recent work in human geography placing an importance upon the agency of space enables a spatial dimension to be injected into Goffman's dramaturgy for the case study analysis offered here. Thrift's (2012) notion of an expressive infrastructure in part argues how place can have actor-hood in terms of generating impetus. A central tenet relevant here is how spaces can both foster and disrupt kinds of action, similar to the mobilities literatures' 'non-cognitive dwellingness' (Macnaghten and Urry 2000:7). This is not incompatible with contemporary engagements with social class conflict:

> other ways of being and doing – a different ontology – is generated that involves the circulation of local value/s beyond the dominant symbolic, one that lives in tension and registers awareness of the unjust judgments made by others, one that lives value differently in the conditions of constant devaluation (Skeggs and Loveday 2012:488).

Different class values and the dominant definition of the situation – how *change* might be operationalised – can be explored empirically. For example, Milbourne's (2003) empirical work on hunting communities. Here, the dominant definition of the situation (after Thomas) in 'hunt countries' promoted the social acceptability of this country sport and this was effectively imposed upon those joining the community. As Shucksmith asks, 'How does rurality itself become a vehicle for increasing and storing inequality and thence for its intergenerational transmission?' (Shucksmith 2013:388):

> focusing on the delineation of classes and class-habitus and the exercise of discursive power through symbolic violence and misrecognition, respectively. Future studies might seek to combine these elements to reveal how class formation is bound up with place and rurality, and how in different places and at different times, this leads to inequality and injustice. Such an agenda focuses our attention on the variety of *historically embedded and locally specific practices* that serve to reinforce and reproduce inequality and marginalisation, whether or not we call these processes of 'social exclusion' (Shucksmith 2012:392, emphasis added).

The paper now picks up the challenge to explore the capacity of rural space to foster and disrupt kinds

of action via one ethnographic case study. There is already a body of ethnographically-informed literature emerging upon privileged or elite groups in specific locales demonstrating the capacity of the approach to access elite spheres. These include the middle-classes in the North West of England (Savage et al. 2005), an affluent and exclusive area of London (Burrows 2013) and elite schooling contexts in the UK and Australia (Allan and Charles 2013). Ethnography is therefore a proven means to study the collective ideas of class symbols, intra-class conflict and the contingent character of space. Does the terminology of 'you are where you live' hold in a rural space that is less affluent? These ideas on class inequalities provide the conceptual backdrop for the exploration of political change and power in one north Norfolk village.

A political putsch: changing social relations and political elites in one English rural village.

The village is first introduced before moving to unravel what had happened, its legacy and to make the argument that it does not map readily onto class. It showed instead that space, gender and class interests operate in rural spaces. However, an internal hierarchy remains along a new axis. The village (population circa 600) was located in north Norfolk in the east of England. The county city is Norwich (population 200K+). The village had a church (and therefore village status), the nearest town was a few miles away and a more gentrified market town was located approximately half an hour's drive away. It was therefore distant from 24-hour services, but nevertheless designated a 'service village' as it had retained its Post Office/ village store, one Public House, the church (although not a vicar), a primary school and a daily bus service.

Norfolk has many attractive villages with desirable traditional knapped-flinted cottages (such as Burnham Market village, colloquially known as Chelsea-On-Sea), but this was not one of them. Hence it had comparatively low second-home ownership and varied housing stock in age and size (property values ranging from circa £100K to £400K+. Source: Rightmove 2014). The natural attractions of Norfolk, such as the Broads or the heritage sites of the religious Shrine at Walsingham and Norman priory ruins of Castle Acre, were not nearby. As one resident of twenty-three years put it in interview, 'we're just out of the expensive area of Blakeney cum Holt cum Burnham Market. So we're the economy Norfolk!' Nor was it a village under threat, the village school was not facing closure, no

fracking or new industrial developments (such as a wind factory)| were imminent and a small housing development had just concluded. As one young mother asked me as we walked to school, what was worth researching about their village, so perhaps its most remarkable feature was that it lacked a 'tipping point' or backdrop of change.

The initial research remit[iv] was to explore the status of the school in the village. The fieldworker lived in the village for three periods of time (of between three to four weeks) and the dataset included semi-structured interviews with villagers and related social agents, numerous 'conversations-with-a-purpose', archival research, documentary resources and fieldnotes of events in the village school and across the village. A comprehensive visual map of the village was collated (photographic, OS and old maps). Results have discussed the central remit to the role of the school in the community (Bagley and Hillyard 2011), the school as a source of social capital (Bagley and Hillyard 2014), the role of the headteacher in the past and present (Hillyard and Bagley 2013) and the ethics of researching village primary schools (Edwards and Hillyard 2012). Emerging work has used proposed housing development in the village as a means to empirically test Thrift's idea of an expressive infrastructure (Hillyard and Uprichard 2013), to explore belonging and exclusion (Hillyard and Bagley 2014) and the meaning of rural law and order (Hillyard 2012). Yet one of the strengths of ethnographic work is its generative capacity (Buscher and Urry 2009) and ability to yield the unexpected or unanticipated findings (Pole and Hillyard forthcoming). During the course of the fieldwork, it became clear that the socially prominent people of the village had recently changed. For example, the school logs (dating back to 1912) showed the headteacher (head) had once been a long-term village resident (living in the adjacent School House) and an important figure in village networks (facilitating Christmas events, fund-raising Whilst Drives and the Parish Council). By the mid-nineteen nineties, this had eroded, with a non-resident and isolationist head and a high turnover of staff at the school.

An analysis of the recent social history of the village, available through the methods described above, showed that local landowners had in the past dominated official roles. This was not an estate village, as the historic family seat (with associate hereditary peerage) was located in another county village. Rather four landowning farming families from in and around the village had been prominent from the late nineteenth century onwards. Intriguingly, by the time of the research, of these four families, three

remained and not all had retained direct association with farming. Furthermore, it was clear that these

families had dominated village social groups in the past, for instance, at school prize giving's by the

Chairman of the School Managers (later the school governors) (Families A and B), chairmanship of the

Parish Council (Family C), the donation a field for use by the village/ school (Family D and B) and

hosting of Whilst Drives (Family B). So Newby et al.'s (1978) model of deferential patronage, albeit

more gentleman farmer than emergent industrial capitalist landowner, had once characterised this

village. Yet at the time of the fieldwork, not one of these families was a member of the Parish Council,

the School's Board of Governors or Friends of the School. Much had changed – none of the three

families occupied prominent social roles. This paper now explores reconstructs what happened and

considers its implications for the composition of the village.

The stickiness of space: the changing environments of the village

The village was sufficiently out-of-the-way to be inconvenient, but had not been immune to change. In

the post-war period, the village's built environment had expanded three-fold after having had a stable

population for over a century. Business directories (such as Kelly's and White's) showed that the

absentee Lord of the Manor had sold their interest in the village after the Second World War and

subsequent new building across the nineteen fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties lacked consistency or

management feasible on the large Norfolk estates of Sandringham and Holkham.

Housing development was an immediate and front stage sign of change, but varied housing stock alone

does not produce class conflict. Yet it had, too, subtly influenced the everyday encounters, flow or

'daily round' of village life. The traditional axis of difference (length of residence) had become

diluted:

> R I was considered an outsider when I moved here because everybody almost wouldn't
>   touch me with a barge pole and steered clear of me. And we were regarded as
>   outsiders. And, although I invited people to coffee, they might come, but I have
>   never been invited back. So the village was very protective and […] when I found
>   people like myself moving into the village, and that's where I found more friendship.
> I   So, the people who were here, were they, I suppose, traditional…
> R They were Norfolk (Interview, female villager, resident 23 years, married).

Effectively, newcomers came to outnumber the 'Old Guard' of established villagers. The siting of the

new builds in the village also both fostered and disrupted social relations. Newby had preferred

redevelopment to the ruination of historic infrastructure, but one born-and-raised villager put it more

pithily:

> And they always used to say, if you had a grudge against somebody, you left them an old cottage in the will. Because an old cottage was a nuisance see (Villager, born and raised, retired, married, children raised in the village).

There had been mild gentrification here (several barns, farmworkers' cottages, a former Methodist chapel), but it was concentrated in the oldest (and hence smallest) part of the village and had hollowed it out:

> The Chapel, the house next to The Chapel is a holiday home. I don't think the first three cottages on the hill – I don't think they're residential, I think they're holiday homes as well. So you're talking about six in this … And also, further up the road, there's another one, so that's seven in this street, you know. And they're all holiday homes (Interview, male villager, married into established village family, children and grandchildren attended the village school).

Therefore, the impact of village expansion was keenly felt by the residents of that section. Savage et al.'s (2005) notion of 'elective belonging' captured the obdurate importance of place for people and how its intrinsic character can reinforce the attraction people have for a locale, above the people or community there. This held very clearly for some residents in this village. For example, one barn conversion in which I stayed had a file of information on shops and attractions – all were outside the village. The village's store, pub, church or playfield (all within walking distance and the latter with new monkey bars) were neither mentioned or prioritised. The School House (formerly the headteacher's tied property) had become a secondhome in the late seventies and remained unoccupied throughout the fieldwork. So the impact of gentrification through redevelopment here was a curious case of impact *in absentia*, but highly concentrated in one zone of the village.

The positioning of new builds in the village brought different residents to the village and created a distinct disruption. Many English villages have expanded outwards from a central green/ main street. Yet here, only the CoE church and school remained in the oldest section of the village, the Methodist chapel, blacksmiths, a pub and store-cum-bakery had either closed or relocated closer to an A-road on the periphery of the village. So, one pub had closed (more accurately been knocked down and the detached house built there named after it), but the village's other pub on the A-road had stayed open (now with a restaurant attached). So amenities had not closed down entirely, but relocated towards passing external trade which was vital:

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> The business trade for the shop is 50/50 between village and passing trade. We need the passing trade. And although we've got regular customers from the village, it wouldn't maintain a shop. And […] the Post Office or the shop […] on its own would not be viable. (Storeowner, married, children attended the village school, resident six years).

So rather than expand from the inside out, the pull of the A-road repositioned village businesses and furthermore new residences. So the situation by the time of the fieldwork was that the original main street into the village from the A-road had been joined by a second road. This second street (originally a back lane leading to the neighbouring village) had been in-filled by residential housing and the two roads met at the older part of the village. A number of village's cul-de-sacs (named variously drives, roads, closes and pastures) had also developed, but were concentrated on the newer road by a ratio of seven to one. The village had effectively become divided into three smaller concentrated areas of residential housing: the old 'heart' of the village and two roads of new in-filled development.

This had disrupted the village layout, but what did it foster? The type of property concentrated inside each zone differed (the oldest being the most expensive) and the new-builds outnumbered the old. In the same way the London tube map over-represents the distances above ground, that was the situation here. It was not physical distance, but the unintended consequences of planning that socially gated this village into three zones – further exacerbated by a lack of pavements along the A-road, inside the village and even leading to the school. These zones superseded old axes of difference such length of residence or even class, but nevertheless fostered difference:

> R   And [close name] and [close name] – they do not get on.
> I   Is that the major division?
> R   I think so, yes. […] I actually had to talk to the children about if their parents were unhappy with neighbours or other grown-ups in the village were saying things about other families, that it was not to come into school. Because we were hearing from some children – one child saying to another, my dad says that your mum's XYZ derogatory, and I said you can't say that at school – my dad said I had to. So actually they were using school as a vehicle for whatever was going on. And it got very unpleasant. We had the police here. And children from one place were being accused […] Ridiculous. Not appropriate at all (Interview, temporary head, non-resident, discussing relations between the two new builds in different zones).

The idea of zones within a residential space echoes early Chicago sociologists' zones of transition that captured the high turnover of less desirable sections of the city. Mining further into the circumstances here and alongside a recognition that rurality is an imaginary representational space as much as lived reality (Halfacree 2007), the transitional zone model did not suit here. All zones had long-term residents (ten years plus). Again, in contrast with global cities like London and also in desirable

commuter villages, some Norfolk property has become unaffordable to the next generation. Here, the

diversity of housing stock in the case village meant affordability but what is affordable to whom is of

course relative:

> I   And did you have links with the village? What was it brought you here?
> Mr R   No. It was a cheap house! End of! […] We didn't even really know anything about the village until we got the house. We just came, drive by and thought right, yeah, lovely. We saw the house and – we saw it in the paper. Me and me dad came round here one Sunday, I think we drove past […] and three weeks…
> Mrs R   I think within a month it was ours (Married couple both from Norfolk, resident eight years, with children at the school, parents living in nearby villages, bought former council house).

Contrast the above, opportunistic Norfolk-raised young couple with this next couple who were

relocating from the South, with a desire to find their country cottage retirement location:

> R   We wanted to get a cottage-style house which was really modern and which was very easy maintenance […] We'd originally looked at Dorset and that, but couldn't find any land for building […] so we drove up here and we were pleasantly surprised, weren't we?
> Mrs R   Mmm. Loved all the flint, didn't we?
> R   And all the villages. And then we, to cut a long story short, we found this advert for these [detached, executive houses] [not a] cottage as such […] we drew up our ideas on the plans and we just put them into process. So, it evolved from there really. (Retired couple, resident eight years, new to village life, from London originally, bought executive detached house off-plan).

This couple were unfamiliar with Norfolk as a county or with village life, but elected to be there albeit

with the consequences discussed later. Yet there were also villagers with fewer options:

> I must admit, when I first sort of came to [village name], that didn't really appeal to me [laughs]. It's not the best-looking place when you first come in, you know. And I moved to private renting and since then mum and dad haven't really helped – I've been on my own. So I was sort of isolated in [village name], which wasn't the best thing. Because when I first came here, I think we had three buses a week […] So, I had to have a car. So, I managed to run a car […] and I then managed to get a council house, and I've been there ever since (Female villager, resident 16 years, divorced, children schooled in the village, Forces background, living in a council property).

Necessity for one villager was very different for others coming to a rural area lifestyle, albeit in a new

area:

> I   So what brought you to the village?
> R   Peace and quiet. We were in [nearby town] with a girl or boy with a transistor radio next door and I said I've had enough. And the children were just old enough – I stayed in [nearby town] while I had to chauffeur them about. [Daughter's name] had passed her test so that was fine, they could look after themselves. Which they did, because I don't think either of them ever actually lived here.
> I   So, had you been in a village before? …

R   I was brought up in a village. Yes, so I much prefer villages (Married, female resident twenty three years, adult children, originally from the South of England, large old cottage in oldest section).

Finally, there were the maligned locals, born there but overseeing the village transform within a generation:

I always say I would never buy a house in [village name]. I mean I was born here and I'd never buy a house in [village name]! Just you know that's had so much development, you know, and everyone who live in a council house, you can't tar them all with the same brush, but you do get some like problem families. And there's a lot of quiet little villages in the area that haven't had hardly any building at all. And you know and of course you're getting so many of these retired people from away, and of course they aren't usually any trouble. But I say, when you see some old age pensioners walk past here we don't know anybody (Villager, born and raised, married, raised his children in the village, retired, in oldest section).

So whereas Murdoch (1995) argued a middle-class influx could shift what ideologically defined that rurality, the influx here was far more diverse. Strong opinions were expressed by the established families towards some newcomers:

R   in the 70s, the council built [street name], which is an eyesore and, of course, whenever there's trouble, it generally comes from [street name] because they live amongst each other like rats in a trap, really. Plus the council will put all the rough families there […] there's been too many social classes in [village name]. Too many diverse social classes, which makes it difficult for it to bond. (Male married villager, born, raised and returned, married with children schooled in the village)

There were therefore clashes across all zones: newcomer-newcomer and established-newcomer groups. This distinction was not helped by the geography of the village, which was unconducive to mixing across zones. Nevertheless what Goffman (1959) labelled as communities *within* communities appeared. That is, shared and mutually supportive relationships within the resident community of each zone. For instance, fostering the appreciated 'looking out' for others' welfare (Neal and Walters 2008):

Mrs R   Well, I think on the whole people help each other out in the village, particularly round here.
R   Oh yes. We're very lucky where we live here. It's just at the right spot because the neighbours are very good, aren't they?
Mrs R   Yes. [when] they moved in next-door but one and we popped a card through the door, yes.
R   I mean we do a bit of watering for people and we have the keys to certain houses (Married couple, resident in the village eight years, new to village life, resident in oldest section).

Reciprocal social networks existed in-zone, for example, one couple lived in a cul-de-sac of former

council-housing. They described exchanges and interactions with their neighbours, including receiving Christmas cards, conversations over the garden hedge, their children being at the same school and, too, that the husband was a tradesman and had done work in some of the neighbouring properties and had also shot rabbits on the farm where one of the neighbours worked. So, whilst they described that they did not know many villagers beyond their street other than through the school, they knew and were on good terms with everyone in their cul-de-sac.

These webs of relations were multi-faceted; locally-driven; occupationally-linked and; over-lapped with leisure pursuits. To apply Halfacree's model of rurality: the *immediate* zone of locality and the lives pursued by those close neighbours were in synch. The external threats that villages face that have unified strange bedfellows (such as school closure, cf. Moser 2005) were absent here. Nor were there cross-village opportunities to network. For example, the cricket, football or darts teams were defunct and the remaining public house was under new management after a period of closure ('no-one ever go in there. That's changed hands god knows how many times, it has.' Interview, female married village, resident eight years). There had never been a village Women's Institute and conflict between zones had manifested in the school and in the opinions of the established farming village families. But did conflict and disruption spill into class relations, via symbolic violence, mortifying practices and/ or enacted definitions that clash with an individual's own accorded definitions?

Putsch

The fieldwork uncovered evidence of a class putsch. That is, who had dominated the front stage of life in the past had been ejected from such roles. Newcomers described the social relations they had found:

R   A bit more of a community spirit […] a lovely togetherness would be very nice.
I   So, do you think it's never felt like that here?
R   No, no – it's a squirearchy.
I   A squirearchy…
R   It was when I came here, definitely, and there's still a bit of it about.
I   Is that big or …
R   The [family name], you see, have got their little clique. And the [other family name] and the [family name] are all the church. I mean there was an old lady who went to the church from our Close, but basically it's only the hierarchy that go to church. It's not the same in [neighbouring village] either. I think it's because it had been engendered that it's a them and us situation. Historically, the council houses in [street name], which are the oldest ones in the village, replaced – I believe I'm right in saying this – well actually [another street name] did, [temporary housing] during the war. And so I suppose they were frowned on and thought of as the poor people. But usually the squirearchy likes to be lady bountiful towards the poor, don't they (Villager, 15 years resident, female, married).

So the past had been squirearchical on the basis of class (landownership and patronage as opposed to purely economic capital), echoing Newby (1977). But newcomers now featured prominently. The current Chairman of the Parish Council, who first joined the council after living in the village for a year, recounted the transition:

> R   I didn't have a clue […] I sort of innocently volunteered. And then really nobody briefed me […] it was run on a peculiar basis as well because the Chairman unfortunately didn't have a clue what he was doing. […] nowadays Parish Councils are run entirely differently – or should be – even to what they were 10 years ago, 15 years ago. I mean you've got to be more stringent, with all the legislation […] it's really a question of suit and tie in a meeting – and people then used to turn up in their slippers – because that's how it was run […] I proposed – in all innocence [..] because the guy who was running it just couldn't cope at all and […] He kept saying he was going to leave […] And I proposed – [villager's name] […] Two weeks later, he resigned. And from then on, that particular family, we were more or less …
> Mrs R   Ostracised …
> Mr R   Ostracised (Married retired couple, resident eight years, new to village life.)

Offence had been taken by the proposal of a new chair from outside the established families. There is, for this village, too, an additional irony meriting note. The three land-owning families had profited from the expansion of the village by selling their land, which then became new residential streets. They had subsequently been metaphorically hoisted by their own petard.

Cloke (1990) details different types of incomer middle-classes via the additional metaphors of colonisation and sedimentation. So when the sedimentation by newcomers (as there was no high turnover) occurred, this affected a retrenchment of the old established elite from officialdom.[v] Yet this did not herald the arrival of a colonising new 'squirearchy.' That is, the new distribution of officialdom roles was too widespread across all zones and types of villager (urbanite, not-from-Norfolk, Norfolk born-and-raised, Southern villager to name but a few) to constitute a clearly united social class. An incident preceding the fieldwork revealed the extent to which the new group was comfortably entrenched. A village youth (whose parent sat on the Council) had been given a suspended sentence for vandalism in the village:

> I did wonder whether she might resign at the next meeting but I don't think she has deemed it necessary (Male resident, born, raised and returned, married with children schooled in the village).

A second example is an open Parish Council meeting (very much a front stage area) that also revealed that the cross-group alliances and sources of influence. An extremely nervous elderly villager addressed the meeting, complaining about anti-social noise (villagers working on racing vehicles[vi]

outside their property). The perpetrator was a Parish Councillor. Such examples show how new councillors were sufficiently embedded to resist criticism (from both neighbours and from those of different zones). In this sense, the Council represented the new, post-war villager and, using Goffman's terminology, successfully configured resources around them. Socialisation restrictions here worked in their favour as they had become sufficiently embedded onto the council over time that their conduct was not questioned, But *inside* the Parish Council group itself Goffman's cultivation restrictions remained distinct, in terms of avocational [sic] pursuits they favoured: the banger racing; to gardening; to running an informal youth centre).

The putsch had a new set of colonisers replacing the indigenous squirearchy, but influence remained concentrated in the hands of the few. As Scott (1991) notes, elites over time need to refresh by recruiting new members. Yet questions about the extent to which ideological re-orientation and place were mutually influencing remain. Thrift's expressive infrastructure holds, in that the *place* disrupted interactions and failed to foster village-wide networks. The avocational pursuits some pursued had little rural character *per se*. This final section profiles one villager who wielded considerable influence behind the scenes – were they the new manifestation of rural space's stickiness?

Belonging non-electively: one key individual villager and their evolving association with the village

This small Norfolk village did for all its peculiarities possess an 'expressive infrastructure' (cf. Thrift 2012) that generated a latent dwellingness as well as deconstructing an old one (as described in the paragraph above). This one individual demonstrates the case. They were not amongst 'those positioned beyond value' or ostracised by the elite, but had been 'engage[d] in value struggles' (Skeggs and Loveday 2012:487). They were a newcomer, but known across all zones of the village and had close friends from established and new villagers and their involvement included the council (but not the school) where they had been instrumental in encouraging others to join. Goffman (1951:295) notes 'a symbol of status is not always a very good test of status' and in preference looked for breaches (errors or restrictions around mis-use or mis-interpretation, socialization restrictions) to betray the operation of power. For him, this included the minutiae (of 'etiquette, dress, deportment, gesture, intonation, dialect, vocabulary, small bodily movements […] [effectively] social style') (Goffman

1951:300). Over time, this villager had been there for over 20 years, during which time the social significance of dialect[vii] as an indication of class had diluted. Whilst their personal deportment leant towards slippers, rather than country-set green wellingtons or Dubarrys (Goodrum and Hunt 2011), they ran their own business, but the business did not run them (as demonstrated by their dog peeing on the end of my bed during one stay). Significantly, they were able to cross-zones but wore this influence lightly (whereas one landowner was absolutely notorious for maximising their influence). This villager ran their business single-handedly (their spouse was in poor health), but despite this invested time in and around the village (acting as a pollster at a local election and also ran/ had run social/ sports clubs in the village).

Thrift (2012) argued that place itself can itself influence 'the body as a means of partnering the environment' (Thrift 2012:8). Yet his analysis was of the need for capitalism to creation of markets to sustain itself. Here the locale is very different to Thrift's preoccupation with London and the urban. Rather than, as for space's elective belonging, this village had created a barrier to (rather than identification with) new members in terms of its built environment, distribution of amenities and the welcome offered to newcomers in times past. Yet place remained obdurate, less in a sense of colonisation (the middle class imposition of their own ideologies across the village) than a cumulative sense of belonging non-electively emerging from residents like this case villager themselves:

> I   What are your own plans – to stay?
> R   Yes, to the bitter end […] Well, once you find a place you like, you don't really want … And we put so much in. I mean we've doubled the size of this house. Not intentionally, but really to accommodate my parents. Which is now part of us, so. You like to see the trees grow up and the plants grow, don't you? When I first came here, I said I bought it for my grandchildren. But whether they'd ever want it, I don't know. I have learnt that you can't impose your wishes on anyone.

Villager (Parish Council/ School Governors)	Connection to village	Affiliation interest
A (both)	Resident, married, 35 years, married, children attended the school, from Norfolk.	Resident, council/ housing association zone. Raised children in the village.
B (both)	Retired, married, resident in old zone. Former headteacher. Not from Norfolk.	Grandchildren at the school.
C (PC)	Retired, married, resident in old zone. Not from Norfolk.	Wife linked to church events.
D (PC)	Married, resident five years, not from Norfolk.	Child at the school and works p/t in the school.
E (PC)	Divorced, resident 16 years, children attended	Former member of Friends of

	the school, resident in council housing zone. Has family in the county.	the School.
F (PC)	Resident in council housing zone.	Banger raced.
G (PC)	Resident six years, children in the village. From neighbouring county.	Local business owner.
Individual A (resident)	Run business in the village, came to village after children left home, village background, not from Norfolk.	Local business owner and organizes social club in village.

The table below captures the overlap of interests very simply in overview and purely to show how this individual differed from those *in* officialdom. They succeeded via their own interactional networks, despite the village's legacy and unfavourable spatial layout. It also shows the diversity of networks and interests inside contemporary villages:

Table 1: Village officials and role and overlapping interests.

Conclusions

This village, from the outside, seemed unremarkable yet it offered a case study through which to explore power, conflict and recent social change. The initial focus on the school revealed a political shift had taken place and this was then unpacked via an inductive approach. Conflict existed, but it was not a village at war or in disarray (a former head described dealing with inebriated parents at the School Sports Day in their new school). The new emerging elite was not clothed in tweed and no deferential forelock tugging took place (cf. Heley 2010 and Williams 2008). Yet the absence of semi-local spaces of the kind Shucksmith (2012) wanted explored did not capture the evolving circumstances and lived reality of this village. Place evoked in some villagers an inverted mortification of self (cf. Goffman) – they did not necessarily like what they initially found, nor how they had been initially treated, yet nevertheless became more deeply embedded and in doing so came to shape the place itself.

Bourdieu's work is currently often championed as a means to unlock the complexity of class. Here, Goffman's approach proved similarly nuanced (on restrictive devices, the importance of front and backstage stage performances and audiences and the amalgamation and storing of assets by colonising villagers). The dramaturgical model also captures how over time actors and the rural are mutually

contingent and that the rural remains a production in-progress. In this Norfolk village, rural change evoked a bloodless coup on the front stage, but the most significant individual there was a female long-term resident, not a Lord of the Manor. Questions therefore arise about rural change on the global scale, as large rural estates are currently in transition (Hillyard 2013) and land values have risen to the extent that they have become a capitalism venture – even for the Leverhulme Trust (Financial Times 2014). What are the implications of moves to 'own the view' for profit or pleasure? This analysis suggested that local elites should not be understood in purely class or rural/ urban terms, but as flowing through space and place. Ethnography's ability to explore temporal, spatial and social relations in the countryside explained this one local political change, but power in the global countryside merits further investigation. Ethnography has proved its capacity to use rural locales as vehicle for social theory (Goffman 1959) and is a need to generate similar insight into rural issues currently prominent. Such concerns include non-renewable energy ('fracking'), how best to meet new housing and transport demands (threatening ecological balances and the green belt) and too broader land use change (such as that of post-referendum Scotland, McKee 2013). This is the next challenge for Goffman's (1969) 'serious ethnography' is to be part of emerging debates on 'big data' and the NSM research agenda and to explore what it offers for rural research (Hillyard 2014) – be it via co-presence or co-location.

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[i] Lord Howell referred to the North East of England as desolate and hence suitable for fracking development. He later apologized (BBC 2013).

[ii] Lacey and Ball 1979.

[iii] See Goffman (1983) for an account of the interaction order.

[iv] ESRC award number RES-000-22-3412.

[v] Of course, the influence of the old elite purely through their ownership of large tracts of land in and around the village meant they continued to wield considerable influence.

[vi] Banger racing more than formula 1.

[vii] There is a distinct Norfolk accent.