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# Knowing One's Place in the Era of Globalization: A Case Study of the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech Automobile Plant in Nošovice, Czech Republic

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## Abstract

The dominant imaginations of globalization create an illusion of a borderless world. In view of the intimate relationship between space and culture, we argue that implicit in this imagination is also a cultureless space. While many scientists have noticed the a-spatial aspects of the imagination of globalization, not sufficient attention has been paid, in our view, to the a-cultural aspects of this imagination. Using the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech car plant in Nošovice, Czech Republic, as our case study, we demonstrate that all actors, presumably involved in this feat of globalization, remain firmly rooted both spatially and culturally. Rather than seeing globalization as an actually occurring process, we deem it more appropriate to view it as a mediating imagination, effectively obscuring and legitimating spatial and cultural inequalities in the present world.

**Key words:** globalization, imaginations, culture, space, Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech

*“Even though both nations find themselves in the same working environment, share identical goals, motivations and problems, it should be realized that Czechs will always be Czechs and Koreans will be Koreans. That is, they will never think identically and will not merge into one whole. This fact has to be respected in all times.” (From the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech entry course textbook, 2007, translation ours)*

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## Introduction

In the early fall of 2005 word got out that Hyundai, the South Korean automobile manufacturer, was interested in building a large car factory in the village of Nošovice in the north-eastern part of the Czech Republic. This plant was to produce 300,000 cars per year; it would create some three thousand new jobs<sup>2</sup>, and the total investment was to be in the order of one billion euros (see e.g. iDNES 2006). This information immediately sparked off heated debates, the intensity of which surged as the national and regional governments rather recklessly pushed for the project against the wishes of part of the local population and some regional and national NGOs. Because of the controversial location of the proposed factory (on 270 hectares of premium agricultural land in the immediate vicinity of the Beskydy Mountains, in a region with numerous brownfields and abandoned industrial zones), and due to the manner in which the project was promoted, various actors became involved on behalf of the farmers who refused to sell their land to the state to enable developing the new industrial zone. The ensuing verbal and legal battles got quite messy and eventually ended in a compromise agreement between the opponents and proponents of the project which made possible the construction of the car plant under specified conditions. During the construction process, the sudden appearance of South Koreans<sup>3</sup> in the ethnically relatively homogenous area sparked further controversies, fears and expectations and the case started to be widely covered by the media as well as in private discourse, as an example of globalization.

In this article, using the current concepts and analytical tools of cultural and political geography and anthropology, we attempt to make sense of what has transpired in Nošovice. We ask to what extent is it possible to consider the process of construction of the plant as a symptom of globalization. Globalization is often associated with TNCs (see e.g. Sýkora 2000) and their blackmailing of governments desperate to create jobs (see e.g. Drahokoupil 2009). It is also commonly associated with intensified cross-cultural encounters and miscellaneous sorts of resistance that these encounters may generate (see e.g. Tomlinson 1991 or Hamm and Smandych 2005). At first glance, the case may seem to conform to some of these conceptions and common imaginations of globalization. However, we think that if we are to refer to the case as a symptom of globalization, we first need to critically re-examine some of these

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<sup>2</sup> Total number of new jobs in HMMC and direct Korean subcontractors was estimated to be 8,420 in 2011. (Moravskoslezský kraj, Berman Group 2007)

<sup>3</sup> Henceforth, we only use the adjective *Korean*, not so much to simplify the text, but principally because no one at any stage of the project used the term "South Korean". This geographically more appropriate term never appears in the discussions and narratives we have recorded and analyzed nor does it figure in HMMC texts.

common concepts, most notably the concept of globalization, and search for a different, culturally and spatially more finely tuned view of globalization that explains cases such as the one described.

First, we will examine the implicit and explicit spatial propositions behind the imaginations of globalization and the power relations associated with the production of such imaginations. Second, we will discuss the cultural propositions associated with globalization and try to relate them to analogous spatial imaginations. Third, we will present and interpret findings from research conducted in Nošovice and its surroundings. Finally we will critically reflect upon the usefulness of the concept of globalization and the practical limits to the most common imaginations of globalization.

### **Conceptualization of Space in Contemporary Human Geography**

There seems to be a growing consensus within contemporary human geography that culture, economy, politics and space are closely intertwined. Geographers no longer conceive of space as an inert, passive, infinite container, in which events occur and objects are set. This unproblematic conceptualization of space, inspired by Hartshorne and, philosophically, by Kant, is narrowly focused on the settings of objects in space and their mutual relationships, and not on space itself. Contemporary understanding of space comes mainly from the reading of Lefébvre (1991) and Harvey (1989), who emphasized the social construction and nature of space which humans call their world. The two authors provided an absolutely different conceptualization of space, one that views space as necessarily constituted and produced through the interactions of political, economic and cultural structures. Space is not their antecedent, but it is their product and necessary component, resource and object of struggle. Deriving from this relational concept of space, produced by dynamic social relations, Massey (2007) theorized space not as fixed and stable but always being in a state of flux and (re-) creation.

As Keith and Pile (1993, 26-27) note: “the social, the political and the economic do not just take place in ‘time’ and ‘space’, they are in part constituted by temporality and spatiality.” According to critical and post-modern geographical perspectives, space is an important dimension of everyday social interactions, which very often, if not always, also create places and transform spaces into places and which also by that same process produce identities and social and political structures (Bonnemaison 2005; Paasi 2003; Massey 2007). The localization of social processes is also important for the creation of social “positions”

from which identities constitute themselves and confront each other. Social space and culture are inseparable, one cannot speak of one without referring to the other at the same time. In the paragraphs below, we will briefly explore the spatial and cultural dimension of the common imaginations of globalization in order to problematize this concept and unveil its hidden limitations, blind spots and political consequences.

### **Globalization and Space**

Globalization, especially for hyperglobalist thinkers, is often approached as a new space-time given of human history. Ohmae Keinichi states that we have entered into a world in which investment, industry, information-flow and individuals move relatively unimpeded across national borders (Ohmae 1995). This allegedly new and unique historical situation is characterized by speed, technology and interconnectedness, and marks a novel epoch offering genuinely new and unprecedentedly glamorous living conditions and opportunities. Surprisingly little does he talk about geographical disparities in the world.

Globalization is commonly seen to diversify the power of states vis-à-vis the power of transnational corporations (TNCs) from the public to private sector. As a result, TNCs are often seen as the hallmarks of globalized capital and, perhaps, globalization itself (e.g. Sýkora 2000). Dicken in this regard speaks about “complex interactions between TNCs and states” (2009, 565), whereby states and TNCs are the core motors of the global economy (Dicken 2003, 1). According to poststructuralists and Marxists, the globalizing processes cannot be approached as an objective and given ontology, which creates a brand-new container or framework for events to take place. We cannot say that globalization pre-exists its construction; on the contrary, it is produced - materially, semiotically and performatively. The nexus of these three forms of production and dominant actors of globalization plays a fundamental role in the production of particular space, which is, as a product of a social activity, inextricably bound up with politics of place and space (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996). It is done in specific places, but it consequently constitutes this “specificity” not only of original places but also goes beyond, spreading into distinct spaces.

Actually, globalization and its political, economic and cultural aspects have come into the prominent focus of human geography (see e.g. Dicken 2003; Yeung 2002; Rankin 2003; etc.). In this regard, human geographers study globalization not as a simple trend or phenomenon but a complex process with significant or even crucial impact on spatial structures of societies. As Yeung (2002, 287) claims:

“geographers now generally agree that globalization should be viewed as a set of mutually constitutive tendencies comprising both material processes of transformation and countermovements, and contested ideologies and discourses that operate across a variety of geographic scales. (...) the discursive dimension of globalization is legitimized through the mobilization of spatial metaphors and geographic imaginations that, in turn, shape social practices and empirical outcomes. In this discursive realm, globalization becomes a discursive representation that has little capacity to produce empirical outcomes. It is the politics of discursive mobilization that effectively shape empirical events.”

In this regard, globalization is seen to be more complex and more deeply embedded in the societal and cultural realms of particular societies, and thus specific spaces, than is commonly viewed.

Deriving from the “production-based nature of space”, together with Massey (2007) we might say that globalization must be approached as an entangled phenomenon: it is driven by a particular (although universalist) capitalist economy and society, and simultaneously it produces a specific “space of globalization” and as such reproduces itself inside it and thus it ensures its perpetual validity and the survival of capitalism. Globalization in this respect has created a complex discursive apparatus in which, first, global scale and global processes are to be seen as privileged, and, second, the whole geography has collapsed in time.

This situation is brought about by structural processes operating at the global-local scale, through their material (re)presentation in localities and places and specific imaginations, which connect the global level to every bit of locality by means of the media and the internet. Massey argues that although the imaginations and expectations of globalization produce a rather a-spatial picture of the world, since they promise a geographically, socially and politically absolutely interconnected and borderless world (see e.g. Ohmae 1995, 2005), the globalizational reality places serious limits on the lower strata of the vertical political and economic scale. In fact, globalization has created spaces not limited by impediments, but these are not present equally over the world, many of them possess a rather virtual and network-based character, and the regime of “freedom” is limited by class, race, gender or nationality. We have witnessed a new international division of labor, which is yet to be delimited by interstate borders facilitating relatively efficient control over the migration and management of labor force. Harvey explains this by uncovering the capitalist embeddedness in territoriality: the (re-) production of capital and the conditions of its existence require the creation of relatively fixed, secure and largely immobile social and physical infrastructures (Harvey 1982, 1985 cit in Yeung 1998). It opens a debate about the

geographical dimension of global capitalism, which was traditionally approached as neutral and isomorphous. On the contrary, it is now understood as being intrinsically connected to politics and thus strategically and tactically modified.

Harvey also claims that “wherever capitalism goes, its illusory apparatus, its fetishisms, and its system of mirrors come not far behind” (Harvey 1989, 344). Thus, on one hand, globalization, as a space created by capitalism, imagined and real, promotes the discourse of open, borderless worlds. At the same time, however, imaginative borderlessness and factual immobility are complement compounds of the same process. This imagination enables free and smooth flows of capital in a borderless world, which is important for TNCs as major agents in stimulating a more open world economy (Agnew 2005, 153) and simultaneously it enables managed migration and control of the mobility of labor force.

### **Globalization and Culture**

The imagination of globalization in its most widespread form is very paradoxical. For one, etymologically, it is profoundly spatial, yet as a geographical imagination it creates an image of an unbounded, unlimited non-space (Massey 2007, 81). We are often provided with pseudo-definitions of globalization such as “space-time compression” or “increasing interconnectedness of....” which overemphasize openness and unboundedness but remain silent about increasing spatial inequalities and closures (Bauman 1998). And two, given the aforementioned relationship between space and culture, the a-spatial view of globalization implies also an a-cultural view of the global space. This might make us think that a new culture-free race of *globals* moves about freely in a border-free world, but empirical observations fail to provide support for such a view. While it is certainly true that many people do move about the planet in large numbers - such as Bauman’s *tourists* and *vagabonds* (see Bauman 1998) - it does not follow that these people lack identity or that they do not respect geographical borders and the cultural norms of other people. On the contrary, we argue that even the people who choose (or are forced) to move, remain firmly rooted both spatially and culturally - to say nothing of those who are forced to stay (Bauman’s *ghettoes*). As Berger (2002) shows, the purported global culture is in fact a plurality of globalized segments of some national cultures.

The common critique of globalization points out the cultural particularity of the globalizing actors and forces and speaks of a Westernization or, even more radically, of new cultural imperialism (e.g. Brecher and Costello 1994; Hamm and Smandych 2005). Some

consider this process a good thing (see e.g. Rothkopf 1997), most, however, condemn it as unacceptable. However, all these authors share the certainty that this process is happening. Tomlinson (1991) early on put in doubt the growing cultural critique of globalization by insisting that we should think of “cultural imperialism” not as a reality but rather as a discourse and ask who produces it, how and with what consequences for power relations. His sophisticated analysis of the discourse showed that it rests upon numerous implicit assumptions about space and culture which are rather problematic and reifying. In the context of our paper, it is safe to say that the discourse of cultural imperialism is more a reaction to the imaginations of globalization as a process leading to a culturally and spatially unbounded world than a description of an actual phenomenon. In this sense, both discourses, that of globalization as well as that of cultural imperialism, come hand in hand, they are both the result of one and the same intellectual training, expectations, frustrations and imaginations.

One of the authors of this paper argued in an earlier publication (Mácha 2006) that the common conceptions of globalization as well as the fears associated with them can be traced to a crisis of the nationalist interpretation of history, in which nations as compact, homogeneous, culturally defined subjects create the social world. The reification of culture and ethnic and national identities is a hidden starting point of dominant imaginations of globalization and cultural imperialism. In light of this argument, the discourse of cultural imperialism may be seen as a Western interpretation of what is happening outside the West or in its internal peripheries. It is the result of frustrated expectations associated with the imagination of globalization, which is unable to see humans in their inextricable cultural specificity. Instead of acknowledging culturally (and spatially) located social actors striving for particular ends, these critics see coordinated hostile attacks on small cultures and point out perpetrators and victims.

Moving on to a more general level, Massey (2007, 87-88) critically reflects on the cultural particularity of the imagination of globalization itself. That is, not only that the principal actors commonly associated with globalization, such as TNCs, are culturally located (see e.g. Dicken 2003, 225), but the imagination itself is rooted in a particular cultural-spatial context:

“just like the old story of modernity too, this imagination of globalization is resolutely unaware of its own speaking position: neoliberal to be sure, but also more generally Western in its locatedness....This is a story of globalization which has been...largely provoked by what is happening to the West, by the experiences of that West; it is in some measure...founded upon Western anxiety”.



Thus, a critical reflection of spatial and cultural presuppositions implicit in common imaginations of globalization make us rethink the fundamental concepts which have characterized the field of globalization studies from the outset.

### **Globalization and Resistance**

Commenting on the previous approaches to the study of nationalism, Rogers Brubaker (1996, 13-22) pointed out that to start a research with the question “What is a nation?” necessarily leads one into a dead-end, self-fulfilling prophecy, because implicit in this question is the unquestioned belief that nations exist. We should not ask what a nation is, but rather *when* it becomes a nation, i.e. under what circumstances this term arises, how it is understood and strategically used by different actors, and how it functions in the structuring and mediation of human social relations.

How do we study globalization then? How do we know (in the Foucauldian sense of the word) what globalization is? How do we distinguish it from other phenomena? One possible approach, which is the most widespread in the social science, is to define the term and then measure changes and correlations with other variables. This is the objectivist, deductive, top-bottom approach, criticized by Rogers Brubaker. The other approach is to study the phenomena that people identify as globalization without attempting to pass a definite judgement about what globalization “really” is. This inductive, bottom-up anthropological approach does not see globalization as an actually occurring objective process; rather, it asks what situations are defined as “globalization” by different social actors, why and what are the political consequences of thus understood situations. Such a “soft” approach to globalization may give us a more fine-tuned understanding of how globalization works in structuring social life in the present world. One way to study globalization using the inductive approach is to analyze various resistance movements which either define themselves - or are identified by others - as movements against globalization.

As we have shown earlier, we have contrasted certain spatial imaginations, created on behalf of/by globalization (unbounded, homogenous) with particular imaginations of locality (embeddedness, culturally specific, variable). We tend to conceptualize these only seemingly dichotomous binaries with a reference to the interconnectedness and mutual constitutivity of both levels. The influential school of imaginative geography gives us methods with which to study the “materialization” of geography into a political space. As was well portrayed before by Said (1979), spatial imaginations are the connections between politics and geography, and

they play a very strong political role, since they can be deployed in many dimensions and situations. They create the constitutive logic of a world, state or region, through which people interpret their own position in a multi-scalar world. In every moment people are confronted with imaginations originating from locality and imaginations coming from “nowhere”, through hi-tech devices and media. As Dijkink put it: “living somewhere means being exposed to the continuous stream of discourse produced by a local society and experiencing events which differ in kind from those happening elsewhere in the world” (Dijkink 1996, 2). However, on the other hand, pointing at Giddens (see e.g. 2003), it is safe to say that local structures, local discourse or local verities are sometimes replaced by global truths, global reasoning of abstract experts, and global institutions.

Spatial imaginations can serve as sources of local identification on the basis of distinction from the “others”, be they the inhabitants of a neighboring village or unknown and fuzzy global actors, both depicted as “non-us”. They can also serve in structuring political mobilizations. However, in contrast to Massey (2007) we argue that the aforementioned a-spatial imaginations of globalness always take particular forms, embedded in the places of living. If we work with the global either in binary categories (global vs. local) or as more intertwined with all scales, still this “other” is confronted with the specificity of “us”. In this matter we need to mention crucial assessment of imbalance in power of TNCs and the state on one hand and regional structures and particular local actors on the other. State apparatuses enforce strategies to invite FDIs (see e.g. Drahokoupil 2009), meanwhile TNCs bargain with the state for better conditions, but regions and localities are often seen as passive and forced to absorb global and national pressures. As a result, in one place globalization could be imagined in terms of technological development and tourism and somewhere else as a positive outcome of institutional thickness. However, it could be also approached as an inappropriate political involvement in the sovereignty of a state, as a disembedding tendency to region, or as a severe obstacle to local life.

This hypothesis makes us re-conceptualize resistance as emerging not as a response to universalist “globalization” but as a reaction to particular projects, with specific purposes, backed and legitimized by different power actors and distinguishing itself against many phenomena, imagined and labeled as globalization. Such resistance can be described as rhizomatic, since it emerges due to particular reasons and takes many forms (see e.g. Routledge 1996; Routledge, et al. 2006). Therefore, we need to approach the study of globalization and resistance with a generous measure of respect for local structures, identities

and characteristics, and focus on specific imaginations of “globalization”, which are perceived as a threat to the locality or region.

### **Research Design and Fieldwork**

We chose as our case study the Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Czech (hereinafter only HMMC) automobile factory in Nošovice for several reasons. The factory is one of the largest single foreign investments in the history of the country, and since, unlike foreign investments into cell-phone operators, banks or insurance companies, it is territorially so clearly concentrated its impact on the region simply has to be immense. It should come as no surprise that this project generated such strong and multi-layered resistance, although it had, of course, as any other project, also its proponents. There was an incredibly rich material on various forms of resistance to be analyzed for the purposes of this paper. In addition, the case of HMMC is very interesting because it involves a non-Western TNC investing in a non-Western (or “newly-Western”) country. Most studies of TNCs carried out to date have focused solely or predominantly on Western companies. In this sense, we believe our analysis may potentially yield new information. Finally, being from this region we could not have avoided getting passively and actively involved in the ongoing debates about HMMC and other actors who at various points in the development of the project intervened and changed its course. Our interest in HMMC is therefore not simply academic but also political in the tradition of normative political geography (see e.g. Rankin 2003).

The research has been carried out on and off since the very early phases of the project and has consisted of dozens of informal, semi-structured and structured interviews with Korean and Czech employees of HMMC, people living in the immediate surroundings of the plant (Nošovice, Nižní Lhoty, Dobrá, Domaslavice etc.) and people from the broader area. It was not difficult to conduct these interviews. Rather, it was difficult not to conduct them, as especially in the most controversial period of the project in 2005 a 2006 when considerable pressure was put on those who refused to sell their land to the industrial zone and there was hardly anyone in the region who would not hold a strong opinion on the matter. Even though those controversies are history, there is hardly anyone, who would not have among their relatives or friends someone who either works in the plant or has worked there. Since the working conditions in the plant are not ideal, especially in the assembly halls, HMMC

remains an important topic of everyday conversations.<sup>4</sup> As additional methods we used content analyses of various documents, press reports and public declarations. Our research has been mostly qualitative and inductive and we certainly acknowledge the need for a more representative quantitative survey of some topics. However, we strongly believe that the material we have collected provides sufficient support for constructing alternative conceptions of globalization. Most of the data presented and interpreted below come from interviews which we have decided, for the purposes of this paper, only to summarize, highlighting the most important findings, typical commentaries and prevailing trends.

### **Globalization and Nošovice**

The HMMC plant was built between 2006 and 2008 in a fields and farmsteads in the villages of Nošovice and Nižní Lhoty in the northeastern part of the Czech Republic. At present the plant employs roughly 2,200 people, 95% of whom are Czech, mostly from local villages and towns. There are about 25 Korean staff (see e.g. HMMC 2010). Other Korean companies have also started operations both within the Nošovice industrial zone and other zones in Frýdek-Místek, Ostrava, Mošnov and Český Těšín. The total number of Korean employees is thus significantly higher but still hardly exceeds one hundred, not counting family members. HMMC is owned by the Hyundai Motor Company and is a member of a South Korea-centered world-wide network of factories<sup>5</sup>. HMMC is HMC's principal factory producing for the European market and the Czech Republic was strategically selected to low labor costs, stable legal and institutional environment, central European location and a close vicinity to the Hyundai-controlled Kia automobile factory in Slovakia. While these geoeconomic and geopolitical circumstances might be of interest, they are rather irrelevant for the purposes of our study. The "manifestation" of "globalization" in Nošovice is the HMMC factory, the process of its construction and the diverse social relations which have developed between its current Korean top-management and the Czech employees, neighbors and local inhabitants.

The site of the plant in the vicinity of the Beskydy Mountains was identified by the regional government as the ideal location for an industrial zone due to the facility of its transformation from a greenfield into a future brownfield, in complete disregard of abundant brownfields and disused industrial zones in Ostrava and its surroundings. Because of the size

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<sup>4</sup> For more information about employee opinions and discussion see the website run by employees of several South Korean corporations: <http://www.hyundai.phorum.cz/index.php>

<sup>5</sup> For more information see Hyundai Motor Company website <http://worldwide.hyundai.com/index.html>.

of the HMMC investment, the project achieved national importance and the national government also became involved in negotiations with HMMC. It was not the project itself but rather its location that generated such strong resistance from the outset. The resistance came from various sectors of society, from the local cabbage farmers, whose land was to be taken up by the plant to the lawyers from Ekologický právní servis, a nationwide environmentalist NGO involved in various national and international campaigns. It would go well beyond the scope and intent of this paper to describe the evolution of the conflict, all of its protagonists and all of its results. Suffice it to say that the geography of this resistance was multilayered and left behind numerous enmities, damages and wounds, some of which are yet to heal.

The period before the construction of the plant was by far the most conflicting. Various actors became involved in the negotiations and protests, each of them pursuing different goals. Those who refused to sell their land founded the civic association Půda pro život (Land for Life) and cooperated with Beskydčan, a regional environmentalist NGO, national environmental NGO Děti Země, and Ekologický právní servis, a national and international environmental NGO. On the other side stood the HMMC, the regional government, the national government, and CzechInvest, the state agency for the promotion of foreign investment. On both sides there were sympathizers who joined public debates, wrote letters to local and national newspapers, or simply expressed their opinion to anyone who would listen. The negotiations resulted in signing a Declaration of Understanding which made construction possible but severely restricted the regional and national governments' promotion of new industrial zones as well as obliging HMMC, among other things, to create a foundation to finance projects increasing citizen's participation, strengthening civil society and improving the environmental protection<sup>6</sup>. The interests of the local people, who did not want the plant to be built, were in the end overrun by the interests promoted by other actors speaking on behalf of the locals. Who in this case was an actor of globalization appears to be increasingly fuzzy.

Signing the Declaration, which opened the door to the project, was not the end but rather the beginning of a long process of negotiating spatial and cultural positions of those who were left to live with the new situation in the locality. The ruthless strategy of the

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<sup>6</sup> Full text of the declaration can be found on Ekologický právní servis website: <http://www.eps.cz/cz2040784pr/pripady/>

regional and national governments, pushing through the project at all cost<sup>7</sup>, left behind a general distaste for the plant, the investors and South Korea. At the same time, the expectations associated with the arrival of HMMC led to land speculation, real estate price rises and various forms of entrepreneurship whereby local businesses sought to attract Korean customers. Billboards in Korean began to appear in the vicinity, including the façade of the only pub in Nošovice. And finally, as the most concrete, visible and persistent manifestation of the stalemate between the proponents and opponents of the plant, a massive earth mound was built around the plant, supposedly to protect villages from the noise produced by the plant.

The plant itself is surrounded by a high wire fence, guarded by a security agency. The plant can be accessed only through well guarded checkpoints. People passing these checkpoints cross a threshold between two worlds with different spatial regimes and cultural practices. The disciplinary regime within the plant generates resistance from the workers, who complain about a stressful, unpleasant working environment (long shifts, short breaks, unpredictable overtimes, erratic shift changes, extreme temperatures, constant supervision and control by the Korean management). The Czech workers started a web discussion forum to voice their complaints<sup>8</sup>. A strike at the end of 2009 led to minor improvements in the working conditions. However, tension remains high and continues to burden the relationships between workers and the management, duly reflected in press interviews as well as in the discussion forum, ethnically defined.

As demonstrated by the quote at the beginning of this paper, the HMMC management made it clear from the very start that HMMC is a Korean company with a Korean management and Korean corporate culture. The entry course textbook goes into some length in describing Korean culture, script, language, customs and practices. The world “global” appears only when the HMMC management unveils its plans for commercial expansion on a (South) Korea-centered map of the world. And even in that expansion, not globalness, but rather the Koreanness are emphasized.<sup>9</sup> Tellingly enough, local businesses competed for the attention of the Korean newcomers by advertising in Korean, not in English. Neither side ever had doubts about the cultural and spatial rootedness of the other.

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<sup>7</sup> There were also death threats against those who did not want to sell their land. The most likely authors were those who did want to sell and were afraid they might miss the opportunity if the project was halted.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.hyundai.phorum.cz>

<sup>9</sup> “When it comes to car quality, think Korean” - Kim Eok Jo, HMMC president, quoted on the official HMMC website <http://www.hyundai-motor.cz/hyundai/>

Language seems to play a very important role in the delimitation of space within the plant (and probably without it as well). Korean and Czech employees likewise switch to their own language when they do not want the other party to understand. Language is strategically used to include and exclude, and to reinforce the cultural barriers. Korean language courses are offered but few ever sign up and virtually no one progresses beyond the rudimentary level. A similar lack of interest is shown by the Koreans when it comes to the Czech language. This could be also attributed to the temporary nature of their stay in the Czech Republic, since their children mostly go to international schools and their education is exclusively in English. Local entrepreneurs were the only ones to show “real” interest in the Korean language, but only as long as it could bring them profit. After the initial Korean craze, Korean billboards started to disappear and are almost impossible to find today. Many complaints by local people about these incomprehensible billboards were also a factor in their quick disappearance.<sup>10</sup> The local space was thus re-appropriated and the Korean presence, aside from the occasional public appearance of Korean workers in the nearby towns<sup>11</sup>, made invisible.

The clear delimitation of Koreans and Czechs in workplaces, reflected by the ethnic hierarchy of management, separation of workplaces and languages, ethnic cafeterias and other factors, sharply contrasts with the invisibility of the Korean element on the other side of the protective wall. While some white-collar workers speak about a feeling of comfort the wall enclosing the plant brings them when they are at work and watch the nearby mountains, people in the surrounding villages equally praise the wall as something that protects them not so much from noise, which at any rate is minimal, but above all from the Koreans. The layout of the plant had to respect certain geomorphologic, biological and socio-geographic (settlements, transport routes etc.) factors. Combined with passive and active resistance and progressive hybridization of the workplace, the plant is being slowly but surely incorporated into the locality while retaining its peculiar and ethnically defined character. The environment of the plant, as well as the space outside it, are familiar and “cultured”. The only area, which somewhat remains spatially and culturally ambiguous, is the strip of land between the plant fence and the village earth mound. If there is such a thing as global space, we might say it is this amorphous strip of land, a no man’s land. Only in this sense might one say that globalization produces non-spaces.

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<sup>10</sup> Some informants described the Korean script as “scattered tea leaves”.

<sup>11</sup> Especially in the golf resorts of Čeladná and Ostravice or in popular Irish pubs in Stodolní Street and a few Korean restaurants in the area.

## Conclusion

Space is inseparable from culture. One presupposes the other. If we are to talk of a global space, we must also expect to find a global culture. But there is no such thing. Behind the supposedly global actors we find local actors, culturally and spatially rooted, who expand their activities beyond their locality, but who nevertheless remain connected with that locality in their self-understanding as well as in their perception of others. Nošovice is not a case of globals meeting locals but rather Czechs meeting Koreans. In this respect, globalization could be seen as a new form of relating to the other. The old strategy of direct confrontation is being replaced by powerful imaginations, which try to hide the existing political and economic inequalities and mask the rising ambitions of economic actors. The imagination of globalization bringing about an a-spatial world also implicitly creates an illusion of an a-cultural / culture-less world. This imagination hides the cultural hegemony of certain localities and their profound impact upon less powerful actors and their self-understanding.

Moreover, if we were to accept Massey's proposition that globalization is a project, we would have to conclude that it is a utopian project because of its disregard for space and culture. Humans will always be spatially and culturally located; they will interpret the world through that spatial and cultural localization and produce particular imaginations of globalization and themselves. We consider it more realistic to view globalization as a multiplicity of contradictory projects the common denominator of which is the desire for expansion beyond the borders of the locality. As Massey (2007, 102-103) emphasizes: "the local is implicated in the production of the global". The imagination of globalization as a free, unbounded world is equally false and politically naive (and dangerous) as the vision of a world composed of self-enclosed, self-sufficient localities inevitably confronting the other (e.g. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations at the global level but also some activists' romantic defense of localities, traditional cultures and ways of life). The global is produced by the local. It follows that there are as many globalizations as there are localities and their inhabitants. The question is what makes some globalizations more successful than others.

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