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Travelling and traveled landscapes: imaginations, politics, and mobilities of tourism

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Introduction to the Special Issue

“Landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them” (Ingold, 2000, p. 193). Landscapes are simultaneously representational and metaphorical as well as sensed and embodied and can be conceptualised as settings for various events (Sen and Johung, 2016), performances (Edensor, 2001) or practices (Cresswell, 2003). Following Massey (2006, p. 46), landscapes themselves can be understood as “events, as happenings, as moments that will be again dispersed”; they are constantly emerging products of multiple intertwining trajectories. Landscape is not a place, an inert backdrop for human activities, nor just a visual representation of or “nature” (Ingold, 2000; Hicks, 2016), but a “set of relationships between places in which meaning is grounded in existential consciousness, event, history and association” (Tilley and Cameron-Daum, 2017, p. 2) occurring via practice, embodiment and engagement with various materialities (Macpherson, 2010).

We take our cue from Edensor (2017, p. 599) who points out that “it seems profoundly evident that no single account of landscape can claim to be singularly truthful, since when we are in and with the landscape, the inevitable selectivity of our attention means that we can never attend to most things”. This is why we need to discuss both the landscapes of travelling and the travelling of landscapes, which this multi-disciplinary special issue sets out to do by bringing together scholarship from tourism (management) studies, human geography, socio-cultural anthropology and ethnology. We investigate the tourist landscapes that occur through both representational and non-representational (Thrift, 2007; Prince, 2019) mobilities of people, vehicles and vessels, ideas and information (Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007). By examining the ways in which tourism and leisure are experienced, practiced and performed, but also constitute various landscapes, we will take a closer look at mobile and embodied practices such as running and travelling on various transport modes such as ferries, cruise ships and coaches. We also discuss the ways culture and politics affect and influence the formation of touristic landscapes. Discussing the contexts of Japan, England, Portugal, Finland, Tanzania, Scotland and North America, Estonia and the USSR, Israel and Turkey, Hungary and Australia, the papers analyse how landscapes are imagined and experienced by tourists and show that it is via the interconnections of numerous narrations, identities, sensorialities and mobilities that the tourist landscapes come to being.

To be a tourist is “to look on landscapes with interest and curiosity (and to be provided with many other related services)” (Urry, 1995, p. 176), and landscapes are constructed via the tourist gaze through mixing perceived “reality” with various images and other representations (Urry and Larsen, 2011; Woodside, 2015). In this way, the tourist landscape can be understood as a representation and a cultural image, which is perceived and consumed visually (Cosgrove, 1998): “a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings” (Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988, p. 1). Of course, vision is but one of the five senses and other sensescapes such as soundscapes, smellscapes, touchscapes and tastescapes, and their varied combinations are important when studying the tourist landscapes: “it is clear that all of the senses are involved in our appreciation of the world. We live in a multisensory world, an allscape” (Porteous, 1990, p. 196). A phenomenological take...
on the sensory and embodied does not look at the five senses as distinct biological conduits of experience, but instead understands the multi-sensory and embodied experience as “something that both surpasses and bears a relationship to the culturally constructed categories that people use to represent that experience culturally and socially” (Fors et al., 2013, p. 175).

Landscapes can be considered major resources for tourism (Liberato et al., 2020), but they also have a significant influence over tourists, their activities and decision-making processes (Doxiadis and Liveri, 2013). Engaging in various tourist practices – sightseeing, shopping, going on tours, visiting attractions and events, walking or running in the cities – is a way how tourists engage with their surroundings and therefore co-create the tourist landscape. However, no landscape can be just a tourist landscape because it would always feature a complex set of different actors: “locals and visitors, sojourners and residents, locals becoming visitors, sojourners becoming residents, residents ‘being tourists’, travellers denying being tourists” (Cartier, 2005, p. 18). The constantly changing travelling landscapes are constituted and co-created through these (consumption) practices and performances, as they obtain new meanings for both the guests and their hosts (Oliver, 2001, p. 273). Travelling is thus simultaneously functional and meaningful; it is cultural, social, political, embodied, narrated and imagined and the tourist landscapes – tourismscapes (van der Duim, 2007) – become networks of urban, rural and wild vistas, human and non-human animals, tourist attractions, (built) environment and numerous other materialities.

Tourists travel in and through landscapes, and their trajectories are essential in producing the landscapes (Massey, 2006). Tourism landscapes are localisable but not necessarily fixed either in time or in space, as they can be mobile and dispersed simultaneously in many locations, times and physical configurations. This is why we need to understand mobility, socially produced motion (Sheller and Urry, 2006), which allows us to analyse the various social processes that take place between individuals and groups as well as to pay attention to the physical spaces where moving subjects encounter each other (Kaaristo and Rhoden, 2017). Looking at tourism in the framework of mobilities theory helps us to see it as an integral element of our contemporary sociocultural lifeworlds. It is also important to also pay attention to the sensory elements of these mobilities as “tourism mobilities examine the embodied nature and experience of the different modes of travel that tourists undertake, seeing these modes in part as forms of material and sociable dwelling-in-motion, places of and for various activities” (Hannam et al., 2014, p. 173).

“Opening onto new forms of spatially embodied relationalities, we find ourselves implicated within a system of moving objects, shifting locations, and multiple points of views – a landscape of mobility” (Sen and Johung, 2016, p. 3). Researching tourism landscapes from the mobilities perspective means studying various practices as lived experiences, where attention ought to be paid to the corporealities, materialities and technologies of travelling (Büscher et al., 2011). Mobilities research therefore includes paying attention to the various modes of transport that do not only take tourists to the destination and back and provide services within them, but they can also be destinations themselves. In this special issue, defining this form of travelling as transport tourism, Rhoden and Kaaristo (2020) analyse coach tours and cruises as mobile attractions and show how mobility influences and directs how the tourists gaze, experience and therefore co-create the mobile landscapes. McGrath et al. (2020) examine the hitherto under-researched river-crossing ferry mobilities focussing specifically on the importance of the materialities of the transport mode, which influence significantly how the tourists perceive and understand their surrounding landscapes and waterscapes. In addition to the transport modes, both mobilities and immobilities of the touring bodies also ought to be studied. The special interest landscapes of parkrun as discussed in the paper by McKendrick et al. (2020) or the landscapes of silence of the spiritual tourists studied by Mourtazina (2020) show us that the tourism landscapes are always co-created by the tourist with their individual set of interests and preferences.
Landscapes can be representations, depictions, images and imaginations of various places and as such “the first and most enduring medium of contact between tourist and prospective or consumed place of travel” (Terkenli, 2011, p. 229), linking the physical environment together with the ideas and values of what ought to be experienced and consumed. Therefore, the tourism landscapes are also created through discourses and narrations whereby a particular one is in the forefront, thus others are made obscure, and “places are represented in terms of what is referenced, reinforced or ignored from all the possible texts and knowledges available”, as the tourist landscape becomes a physical, materialised discourse (Kruse, 2005, p. 90). The landscape emerges and forms following the reference points provided by the intermediaries as the interests and motivations of tourists meet with those of the service providers. Quinteiro et al. (2020) discuss Coimbra in Portugal as a literary landscape, whereas Satama and Räikkönen (2020) show how the locals narrate Turku in Finland as a landscape of embodied homeliness. However, the tourist landscape is never “neutral” but depends on a multitude cultural and political understandings and can also change very quickly. In their paper, Shmuel and Cohen (2020) analyse how the imaginations of Turkey in Israeli media narratives transformed in a short space of 15 years from cosmopolitan, desired and culturally “authentic” destination into a landscape that is perceived as unsafe and unstable. The narratives also vary between different stakeholders and can sometimes clash. Loeng (2020) shows that Western tourists’ narrations about their encounters with street sellers in Tanzania perpetuate the negative stereotypes about some members of the local community, raising questions about who is considered a legitimate co-creator of a particular landscape and by whom. The imaginations and narrations have strong links with the notions of belonging, as the tourist landscapes can also be stages where national and group identity, nostalgia, politics and identity politics are played out and performed. The Soviet landscapes can become sites of simultaneous admiration and alienation, distancing and conformation for the tourists as shown by Rattus and Järns (2020). The questions of national identity and belonging are further complicated in case of diaspora tourism as is shown by Andits (2020) discussing Hungarian–Australians and Bowness (2020) analysing the descendants of Scottish migrants to north America travelling to the “ancestral homelands”. Furthermore, Tham (2020) discusses the questions about (ethnic) identity and belonging in his auto-ethnographic study on Asian solo male travelling mobilities in the Asian countries as a tool for self-discovery.

It is important to discuss all these different elements of tourism landscapes because, as Minca (2007, p. 433) argues, “landscape is, after all, perhaps the only geographical metaphor able to refer to both an object and its description; to recall, at once, a tract of land and its image, its representation”. Therefore, this special issue explores tourism landscapes both as imagined and experienced, representational and non-representational. What the tourists gaze, glance or engage actively with in embodied ways, is made meaningful through the social construction of their cultural or economic values which makes them an integral part of the tourist experience. Indeed, as the papers in this special issue show, the travelling and travelled landscape is “both a material thing and a conceptual framing of the world” (Vallerani, 2018, p. 3).

Bibliography


Mobile landscapes and transport tourism: the visual experience of mobility during cruises and coach tours

Steven Rhoden and Maarja Kaaristo

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to analyze the visual aspects of transport tourists’ experience of mobility focusing on British cruise and coach tourists’ international travel experiences.

Design/methodology/approach – The qualitative data was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews with coach and cruise tourists and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Findings – The visual experience of mobility (demonstrated in the paper by the example of cruises and coach tours) is critical in the formation of transport tourism experiences. The mobile tourist landscapes emerge from the interplay of the subjective experiences of particular modes of mobility (vehicle or vessel) and routes, whereby the two key visual elements are the changing scenery and views of everyday local life as experienced whilst traveling.

Research limitations/implications – The present study focuses particularly on the visual elements of passive transport tourism experiences. It does not account for other tourist activities nor does it study the experiences associated with active transport tourism. Future research could perform a holistic analysis of tourists’ experiences of transport in all its forms.

Practical implications – The findings point to the centrality of the experience of mobility in transport tourism experience. The following two key aspects of the experience emerged: the importance of variation of the scenery that the tourist consumes during their tour and a desire to observe mundane, everyday life elements of the destination, which should be taken into account by the tour operators and service providers in the route design and marketing.

Originality/value – Coach and cruise tourism are rarely analyzed together; this study demonstrates considerable parallels between the two in considering them as transport tourism, a mode of recreational activity where mobility is the central part of the tourist experience and should, therefore, be considered a tourist attraction in and of itself.

Keywords Transport tourism, Tourist experience, Visual experience, Mobilities, Cruise, Coach, Landscape

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The tourist experience is a well-established subject of much research interest within tourism studies and the theoretical, methodological and empirical approaches to this subject are rich and varied. The dominant focus of study has largely been on tourist satisfaction, practices, motivations and performances at the various destinations (Quan and Wang, 2004; Ryan, 2010; Volo, 2013; Ellis et al., 2017; Dodds, 2019). This is of course unsurprising, given that tourists go on holiday to specific destinations – yet it is but one part of the broader tourist experience. In addition to the activities at the destinations, there are also pre-, and post-travel experiences (Sharples, 2019), which include transport to and from the destination and within it (Hall, 1999; Dickinson and Robbins, 2008; Smith et al., 2019). However, it is important to acknowledge that transport is not only a utilitarian travel...
component, comprising monetary price, time, distance and the (in)convenience of travel (Metz, 2004), but it can also be an integral or even central part of the tourist experience or an attraction in its own right. This “transport as tourism” (Lumsdon, 2000, p. 364) means seeking out movement purposefully as an enjoyable activity and experience on a wide variety of motorized and non-motorized vehicles, vessels and aircraft (Ory and Mokhtarian, 2005; Diana, 2008).

The present paper will accordingly focus on two modes of transport as tourism: maritime cruises and coach tours. They will be conceptualized in this paper as “passive” transport tourism, those in which the tourist has no active role in steering nor navigational planning for the transportation mode whilst it is in motion. Although research on one product type very rarely refers to the other, considerable parallels become evident between them when paying attention to mobility as a tourism attraction. Both coach trips and cruises are examples of standardized mass “tourist bubbles” (Jaakson, 2004) and can be viewed as safe-havens for tourists traveling through unfamiliar landscapes. Cruise ships have for all intents and purposes become destinations in their own right (Di Vaio et al., 2018) and coaches represent safe, almost insulated environments for tourists to travel through and visually consume, unfamiliar landscapes (Tucker, 2007). Both of these are particular – mobile – ways of engaging with the surrounding environment, one in which transport “is not only a trivial question of overcoming distance and reaching, it is a way of being in and experiencing various landscapes” (Larsen, 2001, p. 81).

This paper will explore transport as a tourist experience, focusing on the role of mobility, socio-culturally meaningful movement (Sheller and Urry, 2004, 2006; Edensor, 2007; Hannam, 2009), in the co-production of the visual experience of the traveling landscapes. The paper is structured as follows: first, we will review the extant literature on transport tourism mobilities and the visual experience of tourism landscapes. After an overview of the qualitative data collection and analysis methods, we will present the results of the study, identifying the two key elements that determine the visual tourist consumption of mobility: variability of the scenery and the everyday life. Finally, we highlight the paper’s limitations and implications for further research and application to practice.

2. Transport tourism as mobile attraction

“Transport is a fundamental requirement for tourism to occur” (Page and Connell, 2014, p. 155) and while the two intersect profoundly, two main purposes can be identified, even though they are best conceptualized as ends of a continuum rather than discrete categories. First, “transport for tourism” (Lumsdon and Page, 2004, p. 5) which links tourism-generating regions with the destinations and provides access within the destinations in a predominantly utilitarian way (Hall, 1999). Second, transport can also be the central component of the tourist experience: this is “transport as tourism” (Lumsdon and Page, 2004, p. 5), which is the focus of the present paper. Here, the transport mode is pivotal to the tourist experience (Page, 2009) and “the journey itself, as much as the destination, may be part or even the prime attraction of the trip” (Speakman, 2005, p. 129). In this form of tourism, the mode of transport becomes part of the core experience and can sometimes be its main determinant. For example, a cruise ship with its amenities and services can be central to the forming of the experience not necessarily the destinations on the itinerary (Hosany and Witham, 2009; Severt and Tasci, 2020). An increasing number of people taking these types of holidays by an immense range of transport modes (Dileep, 2019) suggests that more dedicated studies of the phenomenon are needed to ensure the body of research remains broadly representative of real world market developments. To reflect terms such as heritage tourism, sports tourism and other forms of special interest tourism, and to link transport more explicitly within the tourist experience, we suggest using the term transport tourism for discussing tourism where the mobility of particular modes of transport are central to the development of the tourist experience.
Mobility is meaningful and embodied, socio-culturally produced motion (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2006) and a key element of the modern life (Urry, 2007). Mobilities theory (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007; Hannam, 2009; Sheller, 2014) allows us to pay attention to:

   the experiential value of mobility [which means] investigating the individual and subjective components of transport, although still relating them to concrete assets of technical and technological transport settings (Scuttari, 2019, p. 19).

Therefore, it is a useful concept for theorizing the transport tourist experience, which happens “on the move” (Cresswell, 2006), following a route where “the ‘places’ are steps or stages along the way” and the traveling process is more important than reaching a particular destination (Ward-Perkins et al., 2020, p. 2).

“Tourism mobilities involve complex combinations of movement and stillness, realities and fantasies, play and work” (Sheller and Urry, 2004, p. 1) and transport tourism includes a wide variety of differences in terms of motive force, skill level, tempo, transport mode or level of tourist engagement. Mobile tourist endeavors as different as ocean cruises (Hosany and Witham, 2009; Huang and Hsu, 2010; Di Vaio et al., 2018), sailing, boating, kayaking and canoeing on inland and maritime waters (Hall and Härkönen, 2006; Mullins, 2009; Rhoden and Kaaristo, 2020), coach tours (Edensor and Holloway, 2008; Larsen and Meged, 2013), cycling and motorcycling holidays (Scuttari, 2019), train travel (Jensen et al., 2015) and many more account for millions of holidays each year. These holidays feature a wide variety of organizational forms spanning from fully inclusive package holidays to almost entirely independent travel (Lumsdon and Page, 2004). The focus of the abovementioned research, however, has mostly been on tourist experiences and motivations associated specifically with their particular modes of transport. Studies focusing on the experience of mobility as a key part of the tourist experience across different transport modes have been rarer until recently (Page, 2009; Scuttari, 2019).

Despite their vast modal differences, mobility is central to experiences in all of the above-listed forms of transport tourism, even if not theorized through this particular concept. The present study, therefore, contributes to the development of the notion of transport tourism, which we understand as a mode of recreational activity where mobility is the central part of tourism product and experience and can, therefore, be considered a tourist attraction in and of itself.

3. Glancing at everyday landscapes of tourism

When engaging in transport tourism, tourists consume the mobility of the vehicle or vessel moving in and through the surrounding landscapes, which we understand as a “set of relationships between places in which meaning is grounded in existential consciousness, event, history and association” (Tilley and Cameron-Daum, 2017, p. 2). However, it should be highlighted that landscapes are not just representational and metaphorical as they also form “through concrete production and consumption processes that connect people to the world by contextualizing their experiences” (Saraniemi and Kylänen, 2011, p. 138). Looking outwards from the “tourist bubble” (Jaakson, 2004) it is evident that the mobile tourist landscapes are also material, embodied and sensory (Edensor, 2006; Scuttari, 2019).

Urry (1990, 2002), and subsequently Urry and Larsen (2011), have provided a seminal critical framework for analyzing the tourist perception and consumption of the surroundings through the predominantly visual sense, the tourist gaze. It is simultaneously ideological and experiential and “at least part of the [tourist] experience is to gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscape which are out of the ordinary” (Urry, 2002, p. 1). The spectatorial gaze that “involves the collective glancing at and collecting of different signs that have been very briefly seen in passing at a glance such as from a tourist...
bus window” (Urry, 1995, p. 191) is especially relevant in this context and has been further developed by Larsen (2001) through the notion of travel glance. The latter is a mobile, cinematic way of experiencing the environment which is co-produced by the means of transport: trains and cars become “vision machines” (Larsen, 2001, p. 88), mediating the visual consumption of the surroundings from the moving vehicles, sealed environments traveling at relatively fast speed. The tourist glance is therefore somewhat detached and passive and forms largely in terms of isolation and distance from that which is glanced upon. Indeed its focus on “speed, mobile visual perception, bodily immobility and the promise of a pleasurable touristic journey” (Larsen, 2001, p. 94) might be argued to be the defining characteristics of a wide range of passive transport tourism products.

However, assuming no sensory impairment and in terms of the lived experience of the environment, visual consumption of the surroundings is always accompanied by other senses: sounds (or the perceived lack of), smells, tastes or haptic sensations (Edensor, 2006). In fact, “in almost all situations different senses are inter-connected with each other to produce a sensed environment of people and objects distributed across time and space” (Urry, 2002, p. 146). Participants in a coach tour for instance consume the surroundings visually, while listening to the tour guide, sensing the comfort (or discomfort) of the seat, sensing the smells in and outside of the coach while consuming snacks and drinks (Edensor and Holloway, 2008). There are complicated sensory interplays at work when the tourist interacts with the surrounding world (Edensor, 2006; Jensen et al., 2015). As Scarles (2009, p. 466) argues:

> visuals and visual practice are not mere aides in the tourist experience, but emerge through fluid interplays that light up the process of becoming by instilling life and mobilising deeper affiliations between self and other.

We, therefore, suggest it is better to conceptualize the tourist experience of mobility as a conglomerate of various representational and non-representational elements, whereby the tourist experience is a co-creation of the simultaneously sensory and cognitive interactions between the tourists and their environment.

The travel glance (Larsen, 2001) provides a valuable theoretical explanation on the construction of the tourist experience via mobility. Through this theoretical lens, we can follow how transport tourism affords specific ways of both engaging with the (travel) surroundings, and of co-creating mobile landscapes. The objects and subjects of the tourist gaze and glance can be varied and do not represent only preconceptions of cultures and places constructed by the tourism industry and media. The tourist views more than just what ought to be seen as dictated by the tourism industry; “as tourists move through place, collective discourses merge with subjective experiential encounters that unfold as not only prescribed and anticipated but also immanent and personalized” (Scarles, 2009, p. 479). Hence, tourists are co-creators of the tourist gaze and glance. Furthermore, as has been increasingly demonstrated in the recent tourism literature (McCabe, 2002; Edensor, 2007; Larsen, 2008; Maitland, 2010; Kaaristo and Rhoden, 2017; Isabelle et al., 2019), tourists do not only look for and consume extraordinary sights and experiences but also the ordinary and the everyday: that “heroic realm of modernity, full of creativity, manipulation and resistance” (Larsen, 2008, p. 23). This has important implications for the understanding of both the tourist motivation and experience:

> For some visitors, an important element in the appeal of the city is the opportunity to experience and feel a part of everyday life. These visitors do not seek recognized tourist attractions or tourist precincts but what they perceive as the real life of the city – a place in which overlapping activities of tourism and leisure now form part of its fabric and life. For them, the everyday and mundane activities of city residents take on significance as markers of the real, and off the beaten track areas, not planned for tourism, are valued as offering distinctiveness (Maitland, 2010, p. 176).
Tourism mobilities are imagined and sensed, visual and embodied, utilitarian and festive, extraordinary and mundane. Recognizing the key elements of how the tourists interact with and co-create the landscapes in movement is therefore of key importance in understanding the transport tourism experience. The travel glance, therefore, needs further study in terms of differing transport modes, as one of the key elements of mediating, facilitating and shaping the mobile tourist experiences of places with multiple and sometimes contested meanings.

4. Study methods

This study is interpretive and qualitative, with the aim of gathering data pertaining to cruise and coach tourists’ experiences of traveling by their chosen mode of transport tourism (cruise or coach), together with the key focus on the topics that research participants found most important. Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews with coach and cruise tourists. To ensure that the interviews covered the pertinent topics and work toward procedural reliability, the interview guide used was developed from the literature review. It discussed reasons for choosing the particular type of holiday (including details such as where, with whom, when, how long and the purchasing specifics); experiences of the holiday (descriptions of a typical day, feelings about constant movement during the holiday, various activities undertaken, and sensory experiences such as views, smells, sounds, tactile sensations, tastes; and personal details. The interview guide was semi-structured to provide the research participants with the necessary flexibility to disclose and introduce new data and topics.

Interviewees were identified through theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 2017), a cumulative method that is based on the category saturation and allows for the researchers to identify the interviewees “according to their (expected) level of new insights […] in relation to the state of elaboration so far” (Flick, 2009, p. 118). During the data collection, interviews alternated between cruise and coach tour interviewees and each interview lasted approximately 1 h on average. In line with theoretical sampling recommendations (Glaser and Strauss, 2017), data collection continued as long as the selected interviewees continue to yield themes that contributes toward theory generation and therefore this method necessitates parallel data collection and analysis. Theoretical saturation occurs when the emergence of new themes ceases and, at this point, data collection stops. In the present study, theoretical saturation was determined at 12 interviews and was evidenced through the stability of the thematic codebook. This number is in keeping with the findings of Guest et al. (2006), who show that 12 interviews are sufficient to establish a detailed codebook, while 6 interviews are sufficient to discover less detailed, overarching themes.

All the interviewees were white, middle-class British citizens, where half had been on coach tours and half on cruises. Both genders were interviewed (three women and three men for both coach tours and cruises). All of the coach tourists were over 35 years old, including three who were over 60 years old. Two of the cruise tourists were younger than 35 years old, two were between 35 and 60 years old and two were over 60 years old. Apart from the retired interviewees (two coach and one cruise tourist), all were employed during the time of the interview. The discussions focused on their international package holidays (coach: Hungary, Germany, Australia, Austria, Italy, Jordan, China, India, Peru and the USA; cruise: Mediterranean, Caribbean, Baltic, Grand Canal in China, Panama Canal and Alaskan coastline). To preserve anonymity, the interviewees were coded according to the type of holiday in which they had participated (cruise = Cr; coach = Co), their gender (male = M; female = F) and are differentiated by a cardinal number.

The interviews were transcribed and coded using NVivo 12 data management software. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, an inductive process of data reduction from interview transcripts to a codebook of themes (Flick, 2009). The initial codes attributed to sections of data, that were later classified categories of description, arose from the primary
data and not from the literature review. These themes were then analyzed, and links between themes were induced. Similarities and differences between experiences according to whether the interviewee had participated in a coach or cruise holiday were explored where appropriate.

5. Results: experiencing the traveling landscapes

All the interviewed tourists referred to their transport tourism experience as “mainly visual […] Travelling in a coach, the movement in the vehicle is like a cinema: you are watching things go past” (Co-M1). Two key elements as experienced within the collective transport tourism experience, reported below, emerge in our analysis: the importance of the constant variability of the changing scenery that emerges in mobility and the subsequent opportunity to observe the everyday life from these moving vehicles.

5.1 Mobile landscapes: the changing scenery

Without exception, all of the interviewees reported that the most enjoyable part of traveling for them was the feeling of novelty, described as “experiencing something new” (Cr-M2). By this, the transport tourists do not simply mean the difference between going on holiday to a destination outside of their everyday environment but that constant mobility of the coach or ship gives them an opportunity to experience “lots of something new” (Co-F1). A research participant explained why he preferred coach tours to traveling to a destination and staying there for a period of time: “If you are going to go on a holiday and you’re going abroad, and you are going to see the world, you have got to move around” (Co-M3), thus linking mobility and visuality of the tourist experience. Viewing the surrounding scenery predominates in the experiences of the tourists: “My eyes are open all the time, looking out and enjoying the scenery wherever I am” (Co-F2). The mode of transport and having to assume no control of the vehicle plays a key role in the experience formation:

You had the advantage on the coach of being able to look out the window when you’re traveling and look at the scenery far more than you would if you were a driver in a car (Co-M1).

On a cruise ship, views of surrounding scenery are similarly central to the experience:

Most of it [the cruise to Alaska], you see land. You’ve got land either side and you’ve either got a glacier and you’re looking at bears, not polar bears, ordinary black bears and things like that. That’s why I liked it (Cr-F3).

These statements demonstrate the centrality of the landscape views to the experience of travel. Indeed, an interviewee even states how she would not participate in a cruise that involved extensive sea travel without the possibility of the sight of landscapes:

I don’t say I’d cruise on the Mediterranean or the Caribbean because I like to see land. I think if you go to Barbados or the Med, you don’t see scenery for days. All you can see is sea, isn’t it? But I would go on a Norwegian cruise because that, I would imagine, would be similar [to the Alaskan cruise] because you’d have the fjords so you can go up on deck on the ship and look out and have all this beautiful scenery for miles (Cr-F3).

Not being able to see landscapes was considered undesirable by other interviewed cruise tourists as well:

Basically you don’t stop, you don’t get to get off the ship, you’re just on 24/7. I’m sure we had just short of a week, something like five or six days, where we were just at sea all day (Cr-F1).

However, that is not to say that the sea offered no new experiences:

We like to sit on the balcony and look for wildlife in the sea. There’s flying fish and dolphins and no matter how far out in the Atlantic you are, there’s always a bird (Cr-F2).
In these accounts, certain patterns in the cruise tourists’ experiences become apparent. Port days are mentioned as enjoyable, as in addition to the prospect of visiting the port destination, port days necessitated travel relatively close to the shoreline and thus enabled the viewing of landscapes whilst traveling. It is important to note that it is more than simply the presence or a view of a landscape that proves attractive for the transport tourists, but rather the fact that the views are continuously changing due to the movement of the vessel or vehicle:

There was always something to watch out for, the scenery changes. A lot of people just sit up on deck and watch it and see the change (Cr-F3).

You can take in not only the place you’re going but also the scenery as you move from place to place. I will be looking at the scenery at the side […] you know, the scenery moves past me. The routes, for me, are just as interesting as the destinations (Co-F1).

However, this means that traveling by coach or close to land on the cruise ship, both of which facilitate visual consumption of the surroundings, does not necessarily equate with an enjoyable experience because instances of limited variation in landscapes is attributed less value: “sometimes you were on a motorway so you did not see things then” (Co-F3). The tour guide can also mediate this notion: “on these long roads where there’s nothing to see the courier will say sometimes there is nothing on this road for another hour” (Co-M3). Equally:

going through the Panama Canal is not as interesting as going alongside countries [in the Mediterranean] because it was just mostly trees, so other than that there wasn’t really anything else to see (Cr-F1).

However, for this particular interviewee, it was still “better going through the Panama Canal than the lead up to it when there was just sea” (Cr-F1). There would, therefore, appear to be a certain hierarchy of visuals that transport tourists consume, based on a gradation of increasing enjoyment that arises from views that are perceived as unchanging, such as the sea alone (lower enjoyment), landscapes that are relatively unvarying (higher levels of enjoyment) and landscapes that offer continuously changing views (highest levels of enjoyment).

In addition to these value and preference based judgments, any particular view also depends on the physical and bodily positioning of the viewer on board of the vehicle or vessel. All the interviewed coach tourists explained how the operators that they had traveled with had some form of seat rotation system that prevented the tourists being seated in any one place for the duration of the tour. These seat rotation systems become important in the development of the experience as they ensure that the coach tourists’ continuously changing views of landscapes do not emerge only due to an ever-changing view as the coach travels along its route but also because of a change in their vantage point resulting from differing placement within the coach itself. These changes can improve or worsen the particular experience. The following coach tourist describes how at one point during her holidays she and her husband had their turn to be seated in the front seat, a much-coveted spot for most of her fellow holidaymakers, but not for her:

Everybody always says they want the front seat, but I never want the front seat so I try to forego it if I can. Why? Because I will just drive then! [Laughs] I won’t be able to take my eyes off the road. I’ll tell him [the driver] to slow down. I’ll make him as nervous as I make my husband! If I’m at the front, all I will do is look at the road [and] in a sense, I will be driving. I don’t want the reality of looking at the road and worrying. The thing is, I don’t like travelling on motorways. That’s the ironic thing, on the coaches you do travel on a lot of motorways. But maybe you don’t feel responsible; you feel safe in some silly way (Co-F1).

The transport mode effectively guides the mobile experience, as the delegation of driving responsibility to the operator does not only mean that tourists can engage in visually
consuming landscapes but also that they can do so in perceived safety. This creates a certain juxtaposition of activeness and passiveness: the tourists do not want to assume any responsibility or even a feeling of responsibility and the need for novelty and variation is directed toward the constantly changing landscapes outside.

5.2 Touristic landscapes of the everyday

An important element of the transport tourists’ narrations of their visual consumption of the surroundings is their interest in human activity. Views of the everyday life of the host population play an important part of the experience of coach tourists because it is these views, rather than necessarily the country’s iconic sights, that provide a discernible experience:

You just look at lots and lots of little things. There’s the occasional major thing. ‘Oh, look over there! There’s the Eiffel Tower.’ But the majority of things are, ‘Oh, look there. There’s a man on a scooter with a dog stood up between his legs.’ That’s what I remember far more than the major things (Co-M1).

Go up the Grand Canal, there’s families and they’re doing their washing and eating, and paddling in the water (Cr-M3).

Consuming snapshots of the locals’ everyday life – in the following example observing a woman in her house – is something that the tourists feel comfortable doing from the detached space of the coach. Had this coach tour participant been on foot:

I would have felt awkward seeing that lady. I couldn’t have walked up to her and said hello. I would have been intruding on her life. But it was nice to see these little snapshots of what life, normal life, is like other than the tourist attractions (Co-F1).

The views that coach travel can afford do not necessarily have to be perceived by the tourist as picturesque. An interviewee recalled how, during her travels around New Orleans, USA, one year after the floods associated with Hurricane Katrina of 2005, she saw evidence of the damage that it had caused and was most affected by the mundane elements of the aftermath of the natural disaster she witnessed:

When you see the houses and it was nearly 12 months on, and nothing had been done. They just had all this blue sheeting on the roofs and she [the tour guide] told us that the blue sheet on the roof means the house has got to be demolished. Then you go a bit further and there were massive caravan parks that they’d [the residents] been put in. So they’d been used to, say, a four-bedroom house or whatever, and they [the authorities] just put them in these little caravan-trailers and they’d been in there ages. . . Yeah [pauses], going into New Orleans it was a bit upsetting because I thought, ‘We’re here coming on holiday enjoying ourselves and these people, they’ve been left with nothing.’ So I felt a bit sorry for a lot of them (Co-F3).

Glancing at the potentially upsetting views also allows tourists to reflect on the meaning, impact and the moral aspects of what they are doing. In this instance, the coach “bubble” serves to distance the viewer from the viewed to the degree that the host communities are exoticized so much as to be equalised with “nature” and by casual association almost excluded from human society and therefore the viewer’s responsibility:

It makes you think there is a huge divide in the world, in poverty, and the way that people live, and the way they accept life. Over in India there are some very rich people as well, it’s not all like that [poor]. But wherever you go, particularly in the Middle East and the Far East, the poverty is unbelievable, and South America is the same. You’ve got to really say to yourself, ‘I’m only here for a short time; I’m a witness to it, I can’t get involved.’ So yes, the cultural part is seeing how people live; there’s nothing you can do about it. It’s like watching, for instance, a lion take a deer; it’s part of life. You know that is nature, and you can’t affect nature (Co-M2).
Cruise tourists talked less about viewing domestic everyday life scenes of the host population whilst traveling, as large cruise ships mostly cannot travel close enough to land to afford such views. Nevertheless, that is not to say that the cruise experience contains no mobile views of everyday life as a tourist attraction. The cruise tourists’ views often tended to be of the industrial activity related to shipping or the everyday life in harbour rather than the home and street life as seen by coach tourists. In addition to the natural attractions of sea life, cruises allow for plenty of views of shipping activities:

Ships, ferries, yachts, fishing trawlers. I would quite happily go and sit on, or walk around, the promenade deck and look and spend the time doing it. And I think the fact that I’ve got endless photos of ships that we passed perhaps is testimony to it! (Cr-M1)

Just spend time in the harbour watching the yachts going in and out, and just soaking up the atmosphere (Cr-M3).

Equally, arrival at and departure from ports proved enjoyable because of the specific shipping activities associated with docking:

They have, like, a pilot for that port [who] comes with his little boat, and he gets on and he takes over the ship to get into the harbour. So it was quite interesting to watch, yeah (Cr-F1).

The mobile experience of cruises and coach tours is more than the sum of the destinations visited: it is the visual experience of mobility on a particular mode of transport that adds to the enjoyment of these holidays. Mobility means that tourists are constantly exposed to new things and the route is a key source of new stimuli. The continuously changing surroundings allow tourists to repeatedly see something new. The landscapes (the more varied the better) through or near to which the vehicle or vessel travels, as well as views of human everyday life within these environments, are enjoyed. Views of human activities are considered mind expanding, particularly when the views are of everyday life in places en route, even when they might be upsetting. However, there are also times when views of the route are perceived with relative indifference and its importance in the tourist experience fades. These situations occur when the route is largely unvaried and opportunities for exposure to something new are limited.

6. Discussion and conclusion: co-creating the changing landscapes of everyday life in tourism

The dominance of visual engagement with the surroundings in the narratives of the tourists presented above supports Urry’s (1990, 2002) argument that tourism centers largely upon gazing the surrounding environs. The fleeting and varying visual involvement tourists have with their surroundings whilst “on the move” (Cresswell, 2006), the travel glance (Larsen, 2001) is an important way of consuming but also co-producing the tourist landscapes. The focus on the visual dimension of the experience, however, does not mean an assumption of no or little involvement of other senses (Scarles, 2009). On the contrary, the body of work by tourism scholars written in direct response to Urry’s thesis (for instance, Veijola and Jokinen, 1994), as well as by Urry himself (Urry and Larsen, 2011) demonstrates the multi-sensoriality of the experience. The tourist glance is not a passive act: as we demonstrated, glancing is in fact active and includes the bodily choreography of movements on board of the vehicle, necessary for acquiring the best bodily position for executing the glance. It also involves making constant choices of what and when to view and how to interpret it.

The interviewed tourists however happily transferred most of the responsibility to the tour guides, to the point that one interviewee did not even want to sit in the front seat. Urry and Larsen (2011, p. 114) conceptualize this kind of behavior as almost child-like whereby “one is told where to go, how long to go for, when one can eat, how long one has to visit the toilet and so on” but with the full understanding by the tourists that they are also “playing at being a tourist.” This allows us to conceptualize coach tours and cruises as passive transport tourism,
chosen primarily because of the enjoyment associated with travel itself, where the operator plans the route and the tourists are not responsible for driving the vehicles or vessels. This frees time to engage more with the landscapes through which the vehicle is traveling, leading to happiness, excitement, relaxation and calm as the passive transport tourist is able to focus their full attention on the views, mobility, socializing and the supporting products.

The amenities of the particular mode of transport can be more important to the development of the tourist experience than the specific destinations (Hosany and Witham, 2009; Severt and Tasci, 2020). However, as our findings demonstrate, mobility – movement of the cruise ship or coach and the subsequent variability of the visual experience – is also a significant part of the development of the experience. Mobility affords landscape views with maximum variability, which were most popular for both coach and cruise tours, thus confirming findings by Schirpke et al. (2013) that assessment of scenic beauty is in positive correlation with the complexity, diversity and variedness of landscape, whereas large homogeneous areas are perceived as less beautiful. However, our study also found that in addition to the varied landscape views (Alexiou, 2018) the transport tourists are also interested in the views of everyday life sometimes seen as different or unexpected compared to the tourists’ habitual home environment. Gazing upon the perceived “otherness”, and particularly the opportunity to observe familiar practices in a novel context is one of the important elements of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002). In glancing at the everyday lives of the destination communities, the tourists fulfill their need to go beyond the traditional tourist enclaves (Edensor, 2001). They ascribe value on the views of the mundane activities of the local residents of the visited place:

constructing their own narratives and relishing everyday scenes – which can seem more extraordinary than a spectacular icon obviously planned for tourist consumption or a heritage building already familiar from countless media images (Maitland, 2010, p. 183).

This applies even if what they glance at is somewhat upsetting and can be explained as the tourists’ desire for what they conceive as reality and authenticity, as well as their need “to perceive oneself as a brave and serious traveler in contrast to a foolish and superficial tourist” (Meschkank, 2011, p. 53).

Mobility, the constant movement of the vehicle or vessel, allows tourists to direct their gaze and glance or withdraw it altogether (Larsen and Meged, 2013). This does result in the visual experience of landscapes likened to a cinematic experience, supporting the suggestion of touristic vehicles as “vision machines” (Larsen, 2001, p. 88). In the case of the coach tourists, the cinematic nature of the experience is also a product of their relatively fast-moving travel through landscapes (Larsen, 2001; Edensor and Holloway, 2008).

Indeed, the coach tourists reflected upon this aspect of their holidays, unprompted, using words such as “cinema,” “film” and “movies” in the interviews. However, rather than simply gazing upon sights at tourist destinations, the traveling landscapes the tourists move through are co-created (Scarles, 2009) through collaboration between the tourist, mode of mobility and the route. As we have demonstrated, the mode-related dimension includes the experiences gained through and related to, the engagement with the particular vehicle or vessel. Route-related experiences are associated with the environments through which the mode of transport travels, and include rural and wild landscapes, seascapes and cityscapes, whereby it is the progression along the route, that is, mobility, that makes them significant for the tourists. The traveling landscapes, therefore, are a result of the visual mobile transport tourist experiences that form in the intersection of the tourist glancing at the surroundings and everyday life of the local residents.

Although our focus on coach and cruise holidays has allowed analysis of the visual aspect of the passive transport tourist experience, it has limitations associated with its sampling method. Coach and cruise are but two of a range of passive transport tourist experience types and thus further research could explore whether the themes arising in
this work are replicated more broadly. The sample size was relatively small and, although data saturation was achieved, future research could test the findings more broadly. Nevertheless, our research offers suggestions for practical application to coach and cruise operators. The tourists’ desire to view constantly changing landscapes indicates that route design is important to enhance holiday satisfaction. Route-design is ultimately a trade-off between utility (time and price, predominantly) and the aesthetic concerns of the traveling landscape, where practicable route design should allow maximum variety, including both the picturesque in nature and views of everyday life (residential and commercial/industrial).

As well as the practical implications, we propose several avenues for future research. The visual is but one component of the experience of mobility and therefore future studies could research other aspects of the mobile tourist experience, such as sociality, the relationship with other tourists. Equally, more active transport tourism activities, those in which the tourists drive or navigate the transport mode (such as sailing, cycling or car holidays), are ripe for study to broaden our analysis further. This could subsequently provide a holistic analysis of tourists’ experiences of various transport modes, which would enable a further development of an experiential model of transport tourism.

References


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Ferries as travelling landscapes: tourism and watery mobilities

Eva McGrath, Nichola Harmer and Richard Yarwood

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to highlight the use of small river ferries as an under-researched but novel mode of travel which enhances and brings new dimensions to tourist experiences of travelling landscapes.

Design/methodology/approach – The study used a mixed methods approach including participant observation, a survey and interviews with ferry users and staff at one river crossing in South West England.

Findings – The ferry attracts tourists as a different and practical mode of transport. The river crossing provides an experience of being on water, and the material structure of the ferry significantly shapes on-board interactions whilst providing new perspectives of place.

Research limitations/implications – This article draws on data collected for a study of ferry crossings conducted at three sites in Devon and Cornwall, England, using multiple methods. The material presented in this article focuses on one site and draws on four interviews, twelve reflection cards and observations.

Social implications – The research highlighted the extent to which the ferry is dependent on tourist use. At the same time, it reveals the extent to which the crossing enriches the tourist experience and celebrates a ferry’s contribution to local place-making.

Originality/value – The majority of research on ferry crossings focuses on commuter experiences, marine crossings and larger passenger vessels. This article makes an original contribution to literature on ferries, as it offers a perspective on tourist experiences of river ferry crossings, reveals how the ferry structure influences interrelations on-board and provides distinctive insights into place through a focus on movement across water.

Keywords Mobility, Experiences, River, Tourist, Ferry, Watery

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

We’re born in water. We’re literally shaped by water. So our human form is shaped by water and we have come to the edges for our holiday on land [...] (sound of a seagull) [we] re-engage with the simplicity of sharing our space with gulls and fish and crabs. And retired river boatmen who take us across a river. We re-engage with that simplicity of ropes and catches.

(Interview with Ruth [1], August 2018. First time user of the Appledore – Instow Ferry)

Tourists leave home to engage with new places in new ways (Löfgren, 2002, p. 5). Accordingly, tourists are often open to exploring “different senses [at] a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life” (Urry, 2002, p. 5). One of the significant ways in which tourists relate to new places is through different modes of transport and travel. This paper explores tourist experiences of rivers and ferries, where the ferry crossing serves as a novel form of transport that attracts visitors and at the same time provides an enriched encounter with the river and its banksides. This paper has three main aims. First, it locates ferries within travelling and tourist landscapes and charts those who use their services. Second, it examines how ferries and their volunteers contribute to/co-construct the tourist encounter with the river. Finally, we argue that the river ferry crossing provides a unique form of movement affording tourists new perspectives and sensory experiences.

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of tourist spaces and places, which are worthy of further investigation. This article
draws upon data from mixed-methods research carried out on a river ferry crossing in
South West England.

Rivers, ferries and the tourist experience

Scholars have demonstrated how individuals are often willing to explore places in different
ways whilst on holiday (Andersson, 2007). Travelling up (Beedie, 2003), along (Larsen,
2001) down (Garofano and Govoni, 2012) and through different landscapes using various
means of transport adds to this experience, allowing new places to be discovered and
mediated through unusual sensory experiences. Consequently, different modes of transport
are sought as part of the tourist experience, rather than simply a means of getting to places.
This “transport tourism” (Lumsdon and Page, 2007) embraces travel by trains (Crang and
Zhang, 2012) planes (Rink, 2017), cars (Butler and Hannam, 2012), caravans (Leivestad,
2018), coaches (Edensor and Holloway, 2008), cruise ships (Dowling and Weeden, 2017),
cycling (Lamont, 2009), walking (Edensor, 2010), yachting (Spence, 2014), sailing (Couper,
2018) and canal boating (Fallon, 2012; Kaaristo and Rhoden, 2017).

Here, transport is not destination orientated, but is about what takes place “during
movement” (Cresswell, 2010, p. 12, Ingold, 2005). And so, in all of these cases, the focus is
on the journey itself, the “points between A and B” (Bassi, 2017; Irving, 2015; Peters and
Turner, 2015; Laurier and Lorimer, 2012), the time in which travelling takes place and the
materiality (Bear, 2013; Ingold, 2007) of the vehicles which shape the tourist experience on-
board. This is an approach which counters Larsen’s (2001) stance in which “arriving
becomes everything, movement through spaces nothing but insignificant, linear,
predetermined and frustrating transport” (p. 3). On the contrary, it is the process of
movement, the experiences and transport itself, which form and shape tourist journeys and
perspectives.

Because travelling has been shown to be meaningful, functional, as well as embodied,
narrated and imagined (Sheller and Urry, 2004), this paper explores the relationship
between tourists and the landscapes which they travel through, by incorporating the term
“travelling landscapes”. This extends Gammon and Elkington’s (2016) definition, whereby
“we can travel through landscapes and encounter the many spaces and places they hold,
whilst gazing back to the landscape from which we came” (p. 1). A “travelling landscape”
perspective firstly recognises that landscape can be viewed whilst travelling and that there
are multiple viewpoints and experiences of the traveller as they are in motion. Second, and
by contrast, it pays attention to the subtler ways in which landscape itself travels. The earth
is composed of an “assemblage of shifting plates, lively molecules and constitutive
elements” (Peters et al., 2018, p. 3) which, at various speeds, and in various ways, moves.
Such movement is most evident on a tidal river, whereby the changing currents create a
system in a state of constant flux. At its most simple, were the viewer to remain stationary,
he or she would be presented with different landscapes as the river ebbs, flows and shifts
over time. The landscape of the river is mobile, never static.

This travelling landscape is negotiated by a ferry that moves, lifts and shifts travellers from
land to land across a tidal waterway. It is a micro-structure (Gilroy, 1993), enrolled in
movement as well as a vehicle through which travellers can have a renewed perspective of
land. Once on-board, suspended on the water, passengers are more likely to feel and
reflect upon the watery and mobile landscape swaying beneath them. Taking these two
ideas together, travelling landscapes refer to the ways in which travelling produces different
perspectives on a landscape that is itself moving, which in turn affects how the landscape is
experienced. It refers to the visual, embodied and represented relationships between travel
and landscape that are sought by tourists. In so doing, the river becomes more than simply
a barrier to cross (Roth, 1997) but is enrolled and co-constructed as a travelling landscape
that is part of the tourist experience and gaze.
There is a renewed interest in what has been called “blue space geographies”, which chart the relationship between water and society (Coleman and Kearns, 2015; Foley and Kistemann, 2015; Pitt, 2018; Völker and Kistemann, 2011). To date, though, most attention has been given to the sea and coast (Davenport and Davenport, 2006; Hastrup and Hastrup, 2015; Peters and Anderson, 2016), rather than rivers. Whilst one collection (Prideaux and Cooper, 2009) has examined forms of active recreation on rivers, little attention has been given to ways of experiencing rivers through the act of travelling. Crossing rivers on bridges (Irving, 2015) or travelling as ferry passengers offers a relatively more accessible way for the wider public to experience rivers. Consequently, this paper seeks to further examine the relationship between rivers and tourism by focusing upon the tourists’ experiences of, and movement on, a river ferry.

Ferries have been extensively explored by Vannini (2012) as a crucial mode of transport between island communities, to enable those who choose “island life” (p. 75) to remain connected to facilities, infrastructure and networks around British Columbia, Canada. Vannini provides a holistic perspective of the predominantly daily experiences of commuters, including how they construct “zones” or spaces on the ferry, and weigh up the time spent in travel with the benefits of living on an island. Although Vannini also encountered tourists, their experiences are marginal to his work, as his main aim is to theorise and understand regular ferry commuters and cultures. Indeed, ferries have largely been considered as commuter spaces, (Bissell, 2018; Bissell and Overend, 2015; Corbridge, 2009; Roseman, 2019; Wright, 2012); yet to do so misses their important contribution to tourist mobilities and their ability to provide a unique experience of water and place to tourists.

To begin exploring how ferries contribute to tourist mobilities, this paper examines seasonal passenger ferries. Specifically, and in contrast to existing work, it focuses on a small foot ferry that only has the capacity to carry twelve passengers in a ten minute river crossing. Significantly this ferry does not cross from a mainland to an island (Baldacchino, 2007; Cosgrove, 2007; Hache, 2007; Steinberg, 2007; Steinberg, 2013), but crosses a river between two places. This ferry is so reliant upon visitor numbers that it only operates in the summer months. Although commuters and local day visitors also use the ferry, it has largely become a form of mobility to “inform tourism, shape the places where tourism is performed, and drive the making and unmaking of tourist destinations” (Sheller and Urry, 2004, p. 1). In this context, we examine why individuals choose to cross the river in this way, given that bridges exist that allow tourists to cross rivers conveniently, in their vehicles, and at a time of their own choosing (cf. Lin and Grundy-Warr, 2012; Strohmayer, 2011).

The work is based on the Appledore – Instow Ferry, in North Devon. The following section introduces this service before outlining how the study was conducted and presenting the results.

The study background: the Appledore – Instow ferry

The relationship between passenger ferries and tourism is particularly apparent within Devon and Cornwall, two counties located within South West England. This area is a distinctly fluvial region due to its beaches, estuaries and rivers and is a popular destination for tourists from within the UK and beyond (Baker, 2005; Hölzinger and Laughlin, 2016; Howard and Pinder, 2003; Tregidga, 2012).

The South West also has the highest concentration of estuaries in the UK (Davidson, 2018), which historically have necessitated ferries to cross them. Although bridges have superseded some crossings, sixteen ferries remain operational within the region, most of which are seasonal (April–October) and operate only at high tide. They cater largely, but not exclusively, for tourists. For example, walkers of the South West Coast Path, which traverses 630 miles of the counties’ coasts, are obliged to undertake frequent ferry crossings, which
can enhance their embodied experience of land, coast, stream, river and estuary (cf. Wylie, 2005). Rather than a barrier, these add to the path’s experience, as evidenced by the South West Coast Path’s exhortation for travellers to use ferries to ‘make your day out even more memorable’ (2019b). Ferries are also used to connect different places, offering tourists a watery experience that is part of their journey or an event in its own right. One ferry that has been revived in response to tourist demand runs between Appledore and Instow in North Devon (Figure 1).

Appledore is situated at the mouth of the River Torridge, six miles west of Barnstaple and three miles north of Bideford in the county of Devon, England. According to the 2011 census, there are 2,817 residents living in Appledore (2011), over an area of 445 hectares. It has a strong tradition of fishing and ship-building and at its peak, there were seven ship-building sites. The majority of those closed in the mid-20th century, with Appledore Shipyard the latest closure in March 2019.

Over time, therefore, the character of Appledore has shifted from a working relation with the sea to a recreational one. Many cottages once occupied by those in the fishing community have now been turned into holiday apartments, corresponding to general patterns of gentrification in coastal areas within England (Coles and Shaw, 2006; Davidson and Lees, 2005).

On the opposite bank is the smaller village of Instow (2011), with a residency of 1,500 over an area of 2,995 hectares. Instow became a popular holiday destination in the Victorian era by merit of Instow Sands, a 1-km sandy beach. It was accessed by the Instow railway, which opened in 1855 as part of Bideford Extension Railway Taw Vale Line that served tourism by stopping at coastal places along the North Devon peninsula. However, as a consequence of the Beeching Cuts (1963), Instow Station was first phased out and then closed (cf. Rhoden et al., 2009). The route of the railway tracks now forms the Tarka Trail, a popular cycling and walking path, running adjacent to the River Torridge.

The two villages are at once separated by, and connected to, the River Torridge through its ferry service. Bridging the Torridge at its mouth is impractical, given that it is over a mile across and has an eight metre tidal range caused by fluctuations in the Bristol Channel.
Tides (2019). At any one tide, roughly 53 million metres$^3$ of water can move in and out of the Taw Torridge estuary mouth, at a speed of 5 knots (Gent, 2017). Such dramatic tidal fluctuation changes the riverscape in a rhythmical way (Jones, 2011). At low tide, sand bars and mud flats are visible, whereas at high tide, larger vessels can navigate through the water. The ferry, though, must re-negotiate this changing channel at every crossing.

The first ferry was recorded in this location in 1639. Throughout most of its history, the ferry operated at all stages of the tide, all year round, responding to public demand. Various, it transported workers to the ship yards, operated as a postal service, and latterly (and increasingly), holiday makers (Langley and Small, 1984). Through the 20th century, a family of ferry keepers operated the ferry, but in 2007 went out of business.

In June 2011, Appledore Instow Ferry Limited was established, with the founding purpose to provide a “community based not-for-profit” ferry service (Nightingale, 2011). Accordingly, the ferry operation relies on volunteers to crew the ferry and help passengers embark and disembark on either side. Only the skippers are paid. The ferry also operates seasonally (April–October) and can only operate around high tide (4 h), meaning that the service is determined by the broader system of river movement, tidal cycles and seasonal dynamics. In volatile weather conditions, such as during storms or on a very wet day, the ferry is cancelled. Notwithstanding, on 29th May 2019, the ferry company transported its 150,000th passenger. Thus, on average, Appledore – Instow ferry transports around 16,000 passengers a year, 2,500 per month, or 83 per day. These numbers fluctuate in accordance with weather conditions, tidal conditions and a calendar of events such as school holidays, or wider community days such as local regattas or carnivals. There are currently two boats in operation, “Sheila M” and “Lizzie M”, both engine powered, and licensed to carry up to 12 passengers and three crew members (Plate 1).

Methods

The Appledore – Instow ferry was examined using a mixed-method approach of participant observation, survey/reflection cards, and ten semi-structured interviews with skippers, ferry volunteers and tourists, conducted during the ferry season of 2018 to 2019 by the lead
author. Following ethical clearance, the author initiated an individual conversation with each prospective ferry crosser whilst they were waiting for the ferry. They were invited to create a “travelling landscape object” (Della Dora, 2009) by drawing or writing about their experience of the crossing on an A5 card, before they got to the other side. On the reverse side, there was a short survey. A total 124 reflection cards were filled in by ferry passengers whilst on the Appledore – Instow ferry, about a fifth of those the author had an interaction with. This article draws upon some of the short-written responses from the survey/reflection cards and reproduces some of the drawings for illustration purposes. It does not however include analysis of the graphic and creative responses, as such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. The analysis will accordingly begin with an overview, drawing upon quantitative and qualitative data from the survey, that details why people travel on ferries. Following this, we explore how the materiality of the vessel and its movement across the water develops relationships between passengers and the river. From a position of being on the water, on-board spatialities and embodied viewpoints enrol tourists into travelling landscapes.

Tourist usage of the ferry: frequency, purpose and rationale

The majority of individuals encountered, 73 (59%), marked that they were using the ferry for the first time. A total 44 individuals (35%) stated that they were “occasional” users of the ferry, and stated that they lived within a 5-mile radius of Appledore and Instow so were deemed to be “local” visitors. A proportion, seven in total, (6%) crossed from Appledore to Instow on a “weekly” level. Based on this figure, as well as data on whether it was their first-time crossing, which town or area they lived in and the purpose of their journey, it was estimated that the majority (70%) of passengers were tourists. This figure concurs with estimates calculated in conversation with ferry volunteers and recorded in field notes, whereby the “ferry serves 70 – 80% tourists” (field notes, 29th May 2018). In total, 99% of the tourists encountered gave their home address as being within the United Kingdom. Ten percent of those encountered stated that they were staying in a “holiday cottage” or alternative rental accommodation in either Appledore or Instow. This signifies that many of the recorded experiences discussed in this paper are reflective of a first, “in the moment” response to the River Torridge, the ferry, and banksides Appledore and Instow. It also suggests that using the ferry, for many, is a novel experience.

One first time user, who lives in London but was on holiday in the area described how he “wouldn’t have gone to Appledore without the ferry crossing” (reflection card, 111). He therefore saw the ferry as facilitating and extending his recreational options, enabling him, for example not only to enjoy the Instow “beach”, but also the “craft shops [and] crabbing” in Appledore, on the other side of the river. Analysing the range of responses recorded for why people use the ferry strongly suggests that the ferry crossing is part of a broader recreational purpose. Replies to the question “What are you intending to do once you get to the other side?” confirm the largely recreational nature of travel (Figure 2). The highest percentage of people encountered (37%) simply stated they were “returning home”, often from a day of recreational activity. Others, (28%) wrote a response relating to eateries (pub, ice cream, fish and chips), traditional activities within waterside areas (Panayi, 2014). Another first-time user of the ferry was simply intending to “potter along the beach” (reflection card 69), whilst others wanted to “sightsee” (reflection card 45, reflection card 109). It was noted that whereas tourists stated they wanted to “sightsee”, locals who were perhaps more aware of the area and what it had to offer, recorded more specific activities relating to the River Torridge, such as crabbing, tombstoning, paddling, surfing (reflection card 117, reflection 121). It was visible during the participant observation that most people travelled as part of a group with friends and family or as a couple, suggesting that the crossing was a convivial activity contributing to the social leisure experience (field notes, 23rd July 2018). As well as the varying purposes, ferry users offered many different
rationales for their choice of transport. These ranged from financial and practical to perceived enjoyment of the mode of travel.

Rationale

Currently, a single journey is £1.50 for adults, and £1 for children, with toddlers and dogs free of charge. These costs are part-subsidised by local businesses in Appledore and Instow who sponsor the ferry, and concur with their non-profit philosophy, which is largely reliant upon a volunteer workforce. As a result, a first-time user of the ferry who lives locally in Bideford reflected: “it is cheaper than the bus and much quicker [whilst providing] a holiday feeling” (reflection card 93). Skipper Isaac concurs, stating that “the other interesting thing is that the ferry’s cheaper than the bus. And so (laugh) there’s a sort of pseudo-economic reason to take it” (Interview, skipper, October 2018).

It was also noticeable that both ferry users and ferry staff felt that the ferry represented a novel form of travelling which was attractive to users. There was a repeated narrative of the ferry being a different mode of transport, in comparison to other more conventional modes, such as the train, bus, cycling, walking or even travelling by aeroplane. It could be interpreted that the ferry as travelling landscape is a disruption of daily routines for tourists, as a ferry volunteer emphasised how the ferry is “nothing like public transport and getting in the car where you just go: normally they get in their car and they go somewhere or they get on a train or a bus or they walk or whatever [but] here you’re on a totally different means of transport” (Interview, Oliver, July 2018). Such a level of difference often contributed to feelings of relaxation, with one first time ferry user describing how the ferry allowed them to “leave the car behind for stress free travel to the beach!” – adding – “will use again during holiday!” (reflection card 1).

The ferry’s sense of difference was also related to a heritage factor, with boats being one of the first technologies of motion (Anim-Addo et al., 2014; Lavery, 2005). A visitor from Zimbabwe and first-time user of the ferry stated “messing about on boats – nothing quite like it!” (reflection card 109), linking travelling on the ferry to a “quintessential Brit. Holiday”. Another described how the ferry reminded him of “ancient history” (reflection card 32), whilst tourist Ruth reflects upon the “simplicity” of the ferry as a mode of transport, which is part of the appeal (Interview, August 2018). It is significant that, despite historic changes and threats to ferry services over time in favour of faster modes of mobility such as trains and cars, the cultural heritage of water-related history remains a motivation for why contemporary individuals seek a re-connection with water through the mode of the ferry.
A visitor’s anticipation of crossing over water; and the “curiosity about the other side” (reflection card 1) is not to be underestimated as a significant part of the rationale for why people choose to use a ferry. Weeden (2011) has demonstrated how tourists often claim to have found a sense of “inner peace” when close to nature, whilst Strang (2004), reveals the visual allure and sensual experiences of water which can incite emotions of “pleasure, fun, exciting, relaxing, you feel really good” (p. 57). The attractiveness of water for tourists has been extended by Kaaristo (2014) who showcases the aural qualities of being by water in Estonia. Rather than being focused on the spatiality of being next to water, the ferry offers an opportunity for people to be on, and travel across water. One ferry crosser reflected on “the joy of the river and the peace and quiet when on the river” (reflection card 41), whilst another simply stated that “water makes me happy” (reflection card 106; White et al., 2010).

A third used onomatopoeic language to encapsulate the sensory experience of crossing on the water, with its “peace, calm, tranquillity, swish of the water, lapping the sides of the boat. Little ripples as the breeze whips up the surface of the water” (reflection card 31). There is an interrelation here between the feeling of being on water and its movement through the wind and the tide, with the material structure of the boat, and the impact of the water on the sides of the boat. These experiences reveal how the ferry is inexplicably linked and connected to its watercourse and how the rationale for using a ferry is often connected to the anticipated experience of being on water and traveling by water. Once the ferry leaves land and is crossing open water, the “splashing sound” (reflection card 112) of the water below becomes more acute, and travellers have an opportunity to pay close attention to the sounds and movements of the water below.

Using the ferry then, is a way not only of appreciating and participating in a different form of mobility, but also leads us to consider the process of the journey. Crossing a river, and being “on the water” is a crucial part of the experience as individuals are temporarily connected to a material structure, the ferry, buoyantly moving over a tidal river.

The ferry as tourist experience

The section above has argued that the ferry attracts passengers for multiple reasons and that the anticipation and experience of being on the water adds value to the tourist experience. However, it is important to pay attention to the materiality of the ferry itself and the way in which being on a ferry shapes and structures those experiences. These include the ferry as a meeting point, with on-board interactions and conversations, often relating to what can be seen on the water, as well as the physical movement of the ferry operating from one bankside to the other.

The convivial space of the ferry

Participant observation on the ferry suggests that the structure of the ferry constructs and shapes the tourist experience (Torridge field notes, 15th April 2018). Vannini (2012) discussed the internal and external structures of British Columbia ferries, including what activities take place in various parts of the ferry, for example the passenger lounge, toilets, and car decks, suggesting that travel becomes a performance of social interactions. These performances can be traced, for instance, in how passengers perceive landscape as spectacle, engage in play and perform ritualised behaviours. However, in the case of the boats “Lizzie M” and “Sheila M”, there is a difference of scale and therefore possibility, as both vessels are twelve seated passenger vehicles, with no private or covered space. As is illustrated in Figure 3, the benches face inwards and so, at full capacity, individuals who may be meeting each other for the first time, sit next to each other in close proximity.

Unique to the ferry as a form of transport is the role of the on-board volunteer, who has the responsibility of overseeing the safe arrival of passengers to the other side of the river. Within the ten minute ferry crossing, key tasks include delivering a health and safety notice,
including informing passengers of where life jackets are positioned, issuing tickets and communicating with the skipper. In-between these tasks, the on-board volunteer may engage in conversation and small talk relating to what can be seen on the river, or answer any questions that travellers may have (Interview Ruth, One tourist, using the ferry for the first time describes how the “people on the boat talked to us – nice sense of community/focal point with fellow travellers” (reflection card 111). Long-established skipper Isaac reflects how “people want to know a lot about you know ‘What’s that ship over there? […]’ ‘What’s that bird?’ […] ‘Why do you only run four hours a day?’ […] ‘What’s that place over there?’” (Interview, skipper, October 2018). The conversations on-board thus both respond to the environment through which the ferry is travelling is through, and relate to the specifics of the ferry service itself, including length of time in operation. Another ferry volunteer, Ed, reflects how he enjoys “talking to people and signposting and connecting people to you know, places to see and cool things to do on one side or the other” (Interview, ferry volunteer, August 2018).

The ferry volunteer thus acts as a “guide” (Interview Rita, ferry passenger, December 2018), both physically providing a safe crossing for passengers and inter-personally curating their journey, including answering questions, signposting key bankside areas and providing local tips. Conversations on-board, facilitated by the volunteer, related to activities on the bankside, in particular the dockyard, including for example, memories of family members working in the shipyard (field notes, 15th April 2018) or the status of the ships (Interview Ruth). For a tourist who, perhaps is just spending a few days in the area, they may indeed appreciate such a local “expert” advice, and such a commentary on the history of the place they are visiting, as it deepens and enriches their experience (Interview Ruth). The ferry volunteer plays a key role in enriching the tourist’s understanding of the area and in guiding their experience when on the river. Through the information given by the ferry volunteer, the tourist may have an increased understanding and deeper contextual awareness of the area, and the river. The on-board volunteer therefore participates in encouraging tourists to observe the landscape and riverscape, as they are travelling, and their travelling enables them to pause, watch and appreciate, in an active way as, typically, “when you’re on the water you can see a long way which generally on land you can’t” (Interview, Oliver, ferry volunteer, July 2018). This is ultimately made possible through the intimate spatiality of such a small-scale vehicle, in which the low-lying structure provides close contact with the water and an opening for people to look at, comment upon and interact with the environment with which they are travelling through (Plate 2).
Conclusion: the place of ferries in tourist landscapes

This paper has demonstrated the inter-relationship between ferries, on-board volunteers, tourists and water. The Appledore – Instow ferry is so reliant upon tourist traffic that it would cease to exist without it; tourist demand is therefore essential to maintaining historic river crossings. At the same time, ferries offer travellers a unique experience of watery landscapes by engaging with the river in ways that are beyond bridges and other forms of transport. The multi-method approach of this paper, including quotes from reflection cards, interviews and photographs from go-along (ferry) interviews have charted how tourists engage with, experience and enjoy rivers in a myriad of ways.

Our work charts the ordinary and extraordinary relationships that ferries and their passengers have with rivers. On the one hand, travelling backward and forward over an apparently constant stretch of water appears mundane and yet, as our work shows, these repeated journeys are rendered unique by tidal changes, weather conditions, currents and on-board interactions. For the crew, these changes are known, acknowledged and negotiated; for the tourist they are unique and exciting. Each journey produces a different encounter, making and re-making travelled landscapes with every crossing. As such, ferry travel and the tourist experience, which has hitherto been largely ignored, deserves attention by researchers. Future work could consider the routes of other vessels, exchanges with sea and bird life, as well as bodily engagements with the vessel itself (its motor, its smell, its pitch). This paper has revealed ferry journeys as a purposeful type of leisure and tourism infrastructure.

More widely, we also posit that a focus on ferries has the potential to further understanding about the ways people engage with and cross over water. Although there is growing interest in the sea (Peters, 2019) and rivers (Krause, 2010), our work is located in estuaries. These are liminal, hybrid spaces between sea and river, water and land. Our paper has started to reveal how ferries negotiate and engage with these spaces: timing the tides, skirting low water, navigating currents and, at every crossing, landing at subtly different locations on the river bank as the water ebbs and flows. Tidal rivers are travelled landscapes that are themselves travelling.
Ferries are both a physical vessel that moves between places, and can be interpreted as a symbolic vessel linking diverse theoretical discussions within cultural geography. In so doing, ferries have the potential to enable scholars and tourists to encounter and connect new places, ideas and perspectives.

Note
1 All names are pseudonyms.

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Further reading


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In search of parkrun tourism: destabilising contradictions or progressive conceptual tensions?

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to reflect on the nature of “parkrun tourism” and the challenges this presents to the understanding of sports tourism.

Design/methodology/approach – The contradictions and contested terrain of sports tourism is discussed with the reference to three of the most widely used definitions for the field.

Findings – Parkrun tourism is introduced comprising four formats: spanning the domestic and global; the informal and formal; the organic and institutional; and the experience and commercial product.

Research limitations/implications – The particular challenges that parkrun tourism presents to existing understandings of sports tourism is considered. The conclusion discusses the prospect of future research, both empirical and theoretical, on parkrun tourism.

Practical implications – The authors outline a range of ways in which parkrun tourism affords opportunity for further inquiry for parkrun scholarship and sports tourism.

Originality/value – A new specification for sports tourism is proposed that accommodates parkrun tourism.

Keywords Parkrun, Sports tourism, Sport, Tourism, Recreational running

Paper type Conceptual paper

Parkrun: emergence of tourist potential

Parkrun has humble origins as a collection of thirteen people gathering to run around Bushy Park in London on a Saturday morning in 2004 (Watterman, 2014). In little more than 15 years, in the UK alone, 30 million parkruns have been completed by 2.1 million registered users who may be taking part in one of over 650 weekly parkruns [1], [2]. Globally, in 21 nations across the continents of Europe, North America, Africa, Oceania and Asia, parkrun reports more than 4 million runners, 0.5 million volunteers, almost 2,000 events and more than 50 million runs [3]. Comprising a timed 5-km run, and typically taking place within local parks, parkrun self-presents as a community, offering opportunities for free sporting activity, affording the possibility for health improvement or maintenance, while celebrating beginner and expert as equals. Offering an alternative to sedentary lifestyles [4] and the problems this presents (Thorp et al., 2011), parkrun is positioned as facilitating physical activity for the private and public good.

An emerging body of empirical research, across a range of disciplines, has explored the broader significance of parkrun. Much of this work has engaged questions around the potential of parkrun as a public health intervention (Stevinson and Hickson, 2013, 2018; Stevinson et al., 2015; Haake, 2018; Haake et al., 2018; Wiltshire et al., 2018; Sharman et al., 2019), and its impact on well-being (Grunseit et al., 2018; Morris and Scott, 2019; Reece et al., 2019; Tulle et al., 2019). Others have explored parkrun and social injustice...
(Goyder et al., 2018; Schneider et al., 2019; Wiltshire and Stevinson, 2018), parkrun as a leisure space (Hindley, 2018), the social foundations of exercise participation in parkrun (Stevens et al., 2019), determinants of parkrun participation (Cleland et al., 2019) and volunteering within parkrun (Renfree and West, 2019).

Although conceived as being local and community-based, in early 2018, parkrun announced that the travel company Exodus had launched parkrun tourism [5]. At the same time, ideas of domestic parkrun tourism are promoted by parkrun LTD and independent groups of parkrunners. This paper adds to the extant literature by reflecting on the possibilities and tensions that are inherent in emergent concepts of the parkrun tourist. In seeking to accommodate parkrun tourism within the broader canon of knowledge on sports tourism, we challenge the contention of van Rheenen et al. (2017, p. 78), who when reflecting on the emergence of such specialist modes of sports tourism, assert that, “[…] the narrow focus on a particular type of activity may pose an analytical challenge to conceptual coherence more broadly”. On the contrary, we posit the opposite – conceptualising parkrun tourism has enabled us to strengthen the conceptual coherence of sports tourism: the emergence of this new practice has afforded an opportunity to re-appraise the wider field of which it is part. First, we introduce the ideas of parkrun tourism that have emerged within the parkrun community, finding that four distinct conceptualisations have resulted. We progress to reflect on the tensions and contradictions that these ideas of parkrun tourism present for parkrun. Next, we review the contested terrain of sports tourism; drawing on three of the most widely used definitions of the field (Gibson, 1998; Standeven and de Knop, 1999; Gammon and Robinson, 2003). Developing the work of van Rheenen et al. (2017), we propose a conceptualisation of parkrun tourism that not only accommodates this with the wider field of sports tourism but also strengthens its conceptual coherence.

Four faces of parkrun tourism

In parkrunning circles, multiple notions of the parkrun tourist have emerged, spanning both global and domestic realms.

The global parkrun tourist

Global parkrun tourism is presented as a partnership between parkrun and one of their commercial sponsors, Exodus Travels [6]. At the time of writing, Exodus was the only commercial travel company offering tourist packages with the explicit support of parkrun. This parkrun tourism is conceived as having two dimensions – it as a specific commercial product [7], and it is a fusing together of kindred spirits [8].

As a commercial product, Exodus Travels offer the opportunity to combine “award-winning adventure” with participation in a parkrun in Poland (Krakow parkrun) and Namibia (Swakopmund parkrun); this is promoted on the websites of both parkrun and Exodus Travels. Furthermore, Exodus Travels highlight the possibility of extending an adventure holiday by flying in early to accommodate a parkrun in Italy (Florence parkrun) and other unspecified destinations. Others might consider this to be adventure tourism, although the interest in this paper is its significance as a mode of parkrun (sports) tourism.

As an alignment of interests and principles, parkrunners are encouraged to consider holidaying with Exodus Travels, which is incentivised with financial discounts, special offers and competitions. This alignment is multi-dimensional. For example, both parties highlight the other’s “community feel” and the sense of “togetherness” that participation engenders. Both organisations draw parallels between the domestic (parkrun is described as a central hub for the local community) and the international (Exodus endeavouring to leave a positive and lasting impact of the communities visited). Exodus presents parkrun biographies for a number of its staff and stress that both parkrun and Exodus adventures have the potential to
inspire friends and have a positive and lasting impact on participants. On the other hand, parkrun also describes both parties as inclusive movements that foster and continuously grow [their] community roots (emphasis added).

A second mode of global parkrun tourist with parallels to one mode of domestic parkrun tourism is considered below.

The domestic parkrun tourist

There are two popular conceptualisations of domestic parkrun tourist, one which promotes collections of sub-types of parkrun, the other which promotes the collection of as many parkruns as possible. Since the Spring of 2018, parkrun has maintained a blog on what it describes as the parkrun tourist series[9]. This comprises a series of 28 posts, which describe mini-collections of particular types of parkrun, with the invitation extended to visit each type. The series has identified many parkrun types, including those defined by the character of their route, quirks around hostnames, geographic location, as well as the landscapes through which they pass. Self-evidently, the parkrun tourist blog raises awareness of parkruns and encourages parkrunners to visit ones that are beyond their local community. Interestingly, the parkrun tourist was also identified as one of the key types of parkrunner in one blog, alongside PB chaser, statistic guru, milestone monster, dog runner, volunteer, buggy runner and “others” [10]. The focus of this type of parkrun tourist is centred on collecting a particular type of parkrun, which may align with other interests of the parkrunner.

Parkrun UK also shares information on “those parkrunners who have attended at least twenty different parkrun events in the UK” [11]. A global equivalent is also available for those who have attended at least 30 events (which should be considered a second type of global parkrun tourist) [12]. By the start of September 2019, several thousand parkrunners were listed on the UK “roll of honour” and, over 10,000 were listed for the global equivalent. Parkrun does not describe this as parkrun tourism. However, beyond parkrun, those whose parkrun experience is not limited to the local parkrun, are identified as parkrun tourists by both independent groups of parkrunners and Exodus Travels. These “collectors of parkruns” are understood by Exodus to be “part of the parkrun tourist movement, trying out different parkruns around the UK” [13]. Furthermore, independent groups of parkrunners have established a UK parkrun tourist Facebook group (with over 5,000 members) [14], and a parkrun World Tourists groups (almost 800 members) [15].

Contradictions or creative tensions for parkrun and sports tourism? appraising the parkrun tourist

There are differences among the four constructions of the parkrun tourist. First, although participating in a parkrun is a motivation for all four modes of parkrun tourism, it is less central to the global Exodus parkrun tourist; here, the parkrun is only one (and perhaps a subsidiary) element of a broader tourist package. Second, there are differences according to whether the parkrun tourist’s focus is on quantity (the parkrun collectors) or quality (Exodus parkrun tourism focuses on experience) or quantity with quality (the variant of domestic parkrun tourist that is focused on collecting particular types of parkrun). Third, the endeavours of some parkrun tourists are celebrated as “achievements” by parkrun LTD; the parkrun collectors are acknowledged by parkrun, with their achievement celebrated in the “most events” list that is maintained. Fourth, the independence that is associated with parkrun participation (choose to participate if you will) contrasts with the tightly scheduled timetabling of parkrun participation in Exodus’ parkrun product.

On the other hand, all modes of parkrun tourism encourage the parkrunner to seek experiences beyond the realm of the local and the familiar. Here, there may be a tension between the local orientation of parkrun (Sharman et al., 2019) and what tourism tends to
imply, e.g. “the local” is associated with the everyday, the familiar and low or no cost, whereas tourism is associated with the out-of-the-ordinary and necessarily higher expense. Indeed, it might be argued that there is a multiplicity of ways in which parkrun and tourism are contradictory, rather than complementary.

First, parkrun valorises the familiar, of being part of a stable community of like-minded runners. In contrast, tourism implies the out of the ordinary, in its most adventurous forms joining unknown others who share the appetite for similar experiences. Second, parkrun is free and purportedly within reach of all, whereas tourism necessitates expense, and often presents as experiences that are beyond the means of many. Third, parkrun is situated in everyday environments, whereas tourist locations are often attractive on account of being in out-of-the-ordinary locations. Finally, parkrun is recreational sport/physical activity, whereas sports tourism is more often than not, associated with competitive or professional sports and tourism more generally is often associated with what Stebbins (2014) refers to as “casual” or “project-based” leisure rather than the “serious leisure” of sport. These contradictions mean the encouragement of the parkrunner as a tourist who collects experiences – extending their community beyond the familiar of the everyday – might be viewed as a contradiction to the roots of parkrun.

Indeed, not only is the conception of parkrun tourism somewhat troubling to the origins of parkrun; it might be argued that parkrun tourism presents particular challenges to the concept of sports tourism. First, although most definitions of sports tourism acknowledge that the sports tourist can be participant, site visitor or event observer, the sports tourist as volunteer is marginal to ideas of sports tourism. Pigeassou (2004) is atypical in that he incorporates volunteering within a typology of sports tourism. Just as volunteering has featured much more prominently in the organisation of mega sports events in recent years (Doherty and Patil, 2019), so volunteering is central to parkrun, and celebrated by it [16]. Although parkrun volunteers are assumed to be local, there is no reason why this mode of sporting participation might be so restricted, and it is conceivable that the volunteer might “collect” parkruns in much the same way as the runner. The possibility of the parkrun sport tourist who travels to participate as a volunteer is not accommodated within existing conceptualisations of sports tourism.

Second, parkrun is, at once, both a mass event and a low-key local event. In the UK, several thousand participate every week; however, this is across 650 events, with 15 parkruns in the UK having a record attendance of fewer than 50 participants. Similarly, at once, parkrun is competitive and recreational, meeting the different needs of different participants. As a sporting event, it is unique and sits uncomfortably with the other sports that are central to thinking when ideas of sports tourism are being conceptualised and theorised.

Third, as the proliferation of parkrun events continues apace [17] and the goal is to deliver a parkrun in every community that wants one [18], defining a parkrun tourist as someone who has participated in at least 20 different events becomes increasingly problematic for sports tourism. For example, there are now 56 events within the boundaries of Greater London alone, making it possible for many to acquire the status of parkrun tourist without leaving their city. Indeed, the Twitter hashtag #LonDone is used to signify completion of all London parkruns. The implication – sometimes insistence – that sports tourism involves a break from the everyday, is inconsistent with this dominant notion of parkrun tourism within the parkrunning community.

The troubled quest for identity within sports tourism

Although sports tourism is now an established field of enquiry, with a sizeable body of scholarship built up over the past three decades (Higham and Hinch, 2018), its definition remains contested. Mokras-Grabowska (2016, p. 13) describes “terminological chaos in the literature […] in which terms are used interchangeably and the differences between them
The plurality of ideas of sports tourism led van Rheenen et al. (2017, p. 88) to undertake a systematic review of alternative definitions in the field, concluding that:

[...] as members of an international network of scholars and practitioners, we believe there remains a need to develop a working definition of sport tourism globally, with a set of agreed-upon criteria.

van Rheenen et al. (2017) identified 30 distinct definitions of sports tourism noting that no single definition has gained primacy. On the other hand, in a carefully executed textual analysis, they identified five common parameters in definitions of sports tourism, two of which were included in the majority of definitions. They evidence that 90% of definitions contained reference to sport as the primary motivation and 70% made explicit reference to space. Also evident, although less prevalent, are references to time (37%), participant experience (33%) and economic considerations (13%). No single definition embraced all five elements, although Pigassou (2004) and Standeven and de Knop (1999) included all but participant experience, and Pigassou (2004) and Bouchet et al. (2004) included all but economic considerations. To highlight the inconsistencies across different understandings of sports tourism we focus on Gibson (1998), Standeven and de Knop (1999) and Gammon and Robinson (2003), each offering an established definition of sports tourism that continues to be among those most widely used by contemporary scholars.

Gibson (1998) suggests a defining feature of sports tourism is that trips must involve a change in everyday lifestyle. She then distinguishes between three types of sport tourism; active sports tourism (participation), events sports tourism (spectatorship) and nostalgia/sentimental/celebrity sports tourism (visitation of sports attractions). This latter mode overlaps with what has elsewhere been titled “sport heritage tourism” (Ramshaw and Gammon, 2005). Gammon and Robinson (2003) distinguish “sports tourism” (sport being the prime motivation to travel, with tourist activity as ancillary) from “tourism sport” (tourism being the prime motivation for travel, with participating actively or passively, in competitive or recreational sport being a secondary activity). They further distinguish between hard and soft variants of each. Hard sports tourism is for active or passive participation in a competitive sporting event, whereas soft sports tourism is active recreational participation of a sporting/leisure nature. Hard tourism sport is participating, actively or passively, in competitive or recreational sport as a secondary activity. In contrast, soft tourism sport describes visitors who engage in some form of sport or leisure on an incidental basis. Unlike Gibson (1998) and Gammon and Robinson (2003), and as reported in Mokras-Grabowska (2016, p. 14), Standeven and de Knop (1999) do not differentiate between types, but rather provide an all-inclusive definition of sports tourism as being that involving:

[...] all forms of active and passive engagement in physical activity, both occasionally or regularly, which is undertaken for non-commercial or non-business purposes, and which requires travelling outside the place of permanent residence and work.

There are some commonalities across these definitions. First, they all include active and passive participation, with Gibson (1998) further differentiating between watching events and visiting sites within the passive participation category. Second, they all include competitive and recreational sports, with Gammon and Robinson (2003) distinguishing these as sub-types using the descriptors “hard” and “soft”. Third, they are all motivation-based conceptualisations, with Gammon and Robinson (2003) distinguishing between types according to whether sport or tourism is the primary motivation for travel.

There are also some shared uncertainties. First, without a precise specification of a travel criterion, many forms of sporting activity could technically be classified as “sports tourism” in each of these classifications, despite not being consistent with what would more generally be understood as sports tourism. For example, away-match travel in a local league meets all criteria of Standeven and de Knop (1999), is a clear example of where sport is the primary motivation to travel (Gammon and Robinson, 2003) and could be
considered a change in everyday lifestyle for Gibson (1998). Second, it might be reasoned that all modes of sporting participation are within the realm of sports tourism in that they apply a break from the everyday world of work. However, this could be problematic given the nature of work for many, particularly those who can mould a working life around their sporting interests. Typically, a sporting activity might be considered to be sporting tourism if it takes place away from home. However, if those working away from home participate in sport in the evening in a pattern that is similar to their work/leisure balance at home (e.g. the recreational golfer “collecting” new courses while working away from home in the summer, in a pattern that is similar to practising at the driving range after working hours in the winter) does this summer sport constitute a break from the everyday, thereby warranting inclusion as a form of sports tourism? More generally, communication technologies have effected a changing geography of workspace for many (Hubers et al., 2018), which undermines a strict division of work and leisure, which may problematise the possibility for some of defining consistently “the everyday”.

There are also points of contention and apparent differences among these key definitions of sports tourism. First, Standeven and de Knop (1999) are alone in explicitly including regular travel; in contrast, Gibson (1998) specifies the necessity of a break with the everyday, while Gammon and Robinson (2003) imply such a break. Therefore, there is ambiguity over the temporal frame. In terms of break with the everyday, it is unclear whether regular weekly, fortnightly or even monthly participation might be considered a break from the everyday. Similarly, if participation is seasonal, but regular within that season (e.g. a trip away for ice-climbing, every weekend in the winter), it is unclear whether this would constitute a break from the everyday.

Second, there is discord over the understanding of what constitutes sport for sports tourism. A central feature of Gammon and Robinson's (2003) classification is the distinction between competitive and recreational sport. In contrast, Standeven and de Knop (1999) focus on physical activity, and Gibson (1998) refers to sport but makes no distinction between types of sport. However, even if an agreement over what constitutes sport can be reached, the distinction between competitive and recreational sport can be problematic where a motivational based approach is used. Thus, both sporting events and independent sporting activity can be either recreational or competitive. To describe the fun-runner taking part in the London Marathon as taking part in competitive sport is a misnomer (which is an example of recreational activity in a competitive event); similarly, the club cyclist travelling to the Peak District to make the best use of good weather conditions to attempt to collect King of the Mountains for Strava segments (an example of competitive activity in a recreational ride) (Smith and Treem, 2017).

Finally, an unintended consequence of Gammon and Robinson’s (2003) attempt to acknowledge the difference in whether the primary motivation for travel is for sport or tourism was to limit what is understood as sports tourism. By introducing the sub-categories of sports tourism (sport as primary focus) and tourism sports (tourism as primary focus), travel in which sport is not the primary focus is not considered to be sports tourism. This conception contrasts with the understanding promoted by Gibson (1998) and Standeven and de Knop (1999). Indeed, the insistence on a primary or secondary focus on sport also implies that a degree of non-sporting activity is required for a sporting activity to be considered sports tourism. In effect, a visit to Manchester to watch a test cricket series at Old Trafford would not be considered sports tourism, unless the visitor partook of some secondary “tourist” activity.

As Mokras-Grabowska (2016) suggests and van Rheenen et al. (2017) demonstrate, there are many ways of understanding sports tourism. Our review of three of the most commonly used definitions highlights that there is also variation and ambiguity in understanding within the five parameters that van Rheenen et al. (2017) identify across alternative definitions of
An inclusive and expansive classification of sports tourists: re-conceptualising sports tourism through parkrun tourism

Our objective was to develop an inclusive classification of the sports tourist. To achieve this, we propose a multi-dimensional classification, which contrasts existing alternatives which include/exclude studies as sports tourism on the basis of a limited range of criteria. We do not use the parameter of “economic criterion” that according to van Rheenen et al. (2017) featured in almost one in seven of the original definitions of sports tourism that they reviewed. This reflects its relative insignificance to our particular focus on the sports tourist, rather than the wider business of sports tourism. Following van Rheenan et al. (2017), we propose that the sports tourist may be classified according to four dimensions, i.e.

1. motivations (exclusive motivation for non-professionals, primary motivation for non-professionals, secondary motivations for non-professionals and for professional sportspeople who engage in non-professional sporting activity when “working” away from home);
2. whether it is event-based;
3. whether the participant is an active sporting participant; and
4. providing it conforms to a locational constraint, whether the visit involves an overnight stay.

Together, these four planes of division result in thirty-two sub-types of sports tourist. Table 1 describes the sub-types and provides an example of parkrun tourism for each (shaded text in final column).

The examples in Table 1 are illustrative, rather than exclusive. However, it becomes clear that the popular conceptions of parkrun tourism that prevail among the wider parkrunning community do not align to a single mode in this typology. While it may be most apt to portray the sports tourism of domestic collectors of parkruns as being only motivated by sport, event-based, sporting participant and day-tripper (Row 1 in the Table), it is plausible that some of their collecting might occur as part of a day-trip that is not exclusively given over to parkrunning (Row 9), in an opportunistic manner when by chance a day’s work away from home takes them to the vicinity of a parkrun (Row 17), when on holiday in a location with a parkrun (Row 18), or for each of the above, to complete a “freedom run”[19], as their visit does not co-incide with a formal parkun event (rows 5, 13, 21 and 22, respectively). Likewise, other formulations are possible for the other three popular notions of parkrun tourist that prevail in the parkrunning community: although the domestic collector of parkrun by type might be most likely to be motivated by sport, event-based, sporting participant and, depending on the parkrun location in relation to home, be either day-tripper (Row 1) or overnight stayer (Row 2); the global parkrun collector might be expected to be motivated by sport, event-based, sporting participant and overnight stayer (Row 2); and the consumer of the global parkrun product is most likely to have sports as secondary motivation, be an overnight stayer, while also being an event based, sporting participant (Row 18).

Location is central to our conceptualisation, and we provide a more precise specification than that which has been used in many definitions of sports tourism so far; we propose that to be considered sports tourism, it must involve participation in sport and a journey that necessitates either:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1</strong> Conceiving of parkrun tourist</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sport motivation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Sport as only motivation</td>
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<td>2 Event-based</td>
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<td>3 Not Event-based</td>
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<td>4 Non-sporting participant</td>
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<td>9 Sport as Primary Motivation</td>
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<td>10 Event-based</td>
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<td>11 Non-sporting participant</td>
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<td>12 Overnight stay</td>
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<td>13 Event-based</td>
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<td>15 Event-based</td>
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<td>16 Non-sporting participant</td>
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<td>17 Sport as Secondary Motivation</td>
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<td>18 Event-based</td>
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<td>33 Event-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>34 Non-sporting participant</td>
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</table>
an overnight stay away from home;

- a day visit to partake of non-event based sporting activity that is beyond the local realm; or

- a day visit to participate in a local league or series and also involves a leisure activity beyond travel and sporting participation and the immediate activities associated with each (e.g. respectively), such as stopping off en route to refuel (associated with travel) or post-match socialisation with opponents, before travelling home (associated with sporting participation).

Given different cultural norms about what constitutes “local” travel (Czepkiewicz et al., 2018), it is considered unhelpful to specify a precise distance for the boundary between local/non-local. Taken together, these specificities of these locational parameters avoid inclusion within sports tourism of what might be rightly viewed as regular sporting activity.

The temporal dimension has been a point of contention, with some definitions arguing that sports tourism necessitates an overnight stay. Our conceptualisation proposes that sports tourism need not necessarily include an overnight stay, acknowledging the importance of day trips in domestic tourism (Allan et al., 2007).

Although sport motivation features prominently in definitions of sports tourism (Van Rheenen et al., 2017), there has been discord over what is included, with some arguing that sport is the only motivation, others that it can be the primary (rather than the exclusive) motivation, while others still accept that it can also be a secondary motivation to tourism. Our conceptualisation favours an inclusive approach that incorporates all of these. Providing that sport is a motivation, we find it useful to include as sports tourists those for whom sport in the only, the primary and a subsidiary motivation for the tourist trip. We also find it useful to conceive as sports tourism when the professional sportsperson partakes of subsidiary sporting activity in addition to her/his work. It might reasonably be argued that this can be accommodated within “sport as secondary motivation”. However, we find it useful to give prominence to this as the sports tourism of sports professionals is often explicitly omitted from definitions of sports tourism.

Increasingly less contentious is the acceptance that sporting tourism can be event-based and non-event based, and can involve sporting participants and non-participants. While it would be an over-statement to suggest that consensus has been reached on these points, it is certainly now a prevailing view.

The utility of our classification is drawn from its multi-dimensional framework and inclusive focus, which leads to an expansive understanding of the sports tourist. Although 32 categories are unwieldy, the objective is not to classify apart and to pursue a divisive understanding of the field. Rather, we provide a framework for better understanding the commonality across different forms of sports tourism; rather than undermining an overarching sense of sports tourism (van Rheenen et al., 2017), it is argued that this conceptualisation is well placed to identify the commonalities across what may appear different experiences of sports tourism. It also does not seek to undermine the utility of existing conceptualisations of tourism, but it nevertheless draws upon the wider base of knowledge in sports tourism to offer some critical appreciation. Specifically, for example, we would argue that there is merit in exploring ideas around the parkrun tourist as collector, while (with the benefit of Table 1), acknowledging that this collecting may take many forms beyond existing distinctions between domestic and global, and collectors by number, and by type.

Conclusion: empirical and theoretical directions for parkrun research

With more than five million participants and over 50 million participations, our understanding of sports tourism must be able to accommodate parkrun, a sporting phenomenon that has grounds to support its grand claim of being a “global sporting movement” (Fullagar, 2016).
Regardless of whether the parkrun tourist is conceived as consumer of a commercial product; or a domestic/global collector focused on number, type or quirk, the emergence of parkrun tourism in the parkrun consciousness generates a rich empirical research agenda for sports tourism. What is the scale of parkrun tourism? To what extent can parkrun be used as part of the wider tourist offer? Does the promotion of parkrun tourism engender a re-evaluation of our understanding of places hitherto marginal to tourism? To what extent do domestic parkrun tourists constitute a collective? What are the demographic characteristics of those who comprise parkrun tourists? To what extent do parkrun tourists engage with parkruns post-run coffee culture? To what extent do parkrun regulars embrace parkrun tourists? Research could extend beyond the study of sports tourism and ask the following geographical questions:

Q1. What is the geographical reach of domestic parkrun tourists?

Q2. Is the parkrun tourist de-sensitised or hyper-sensitised to the landscapes through which they run?

Q3. Does parkrun opens up spaces for leisure which hitherto women were less likely to use than men?

The emergence of parkrun also raises a rich vein of theoretical issues for scholars of sports tourism. For example, following Auge (1995), to what extent can we understand parkrun as creating a place from the non-place of a park as it takes on different meanings in the minds of parkrunners? Tzanelli's (2014) reflections on tourism in Rio around the Olympics as being an instrument of ideology and a means to exert power and control, resonate with those who view “exercise as medicine” (of which parkrun is an exemplar) as having a neoliberal undercurrent premised on the individual’s responsibility for managing health and well-being (Pullen and Malcolm, 2018). The extent to which parkrun constitutes the commodification of public space at the cost of the wider public for the gain of a private limited company should also be considered, given the controversies that have surrounded attempts made by some local authorities to be compensated for the hidden costs of parkrun (Darby, 2016). In what sense does parkrun constitute the “global social movement” that it, and its supporters’, assert? Is the notion of a social movement challenged when the benefit is conceived as being primarily private gain? Furthermore, while there would appear much alignment between the mobilities turn in social sciences and the emergence of parkrun (both challenging sedentarism; both concerned with the reimagining of the everyday as a meaningful landscape), it is questionable whether travelling to parkrun is conceived as more than the functional means-to-an-end that the mobilities turn seeks to challenge.

However, the immediate purpose of this paper has been conceptual, appraising the concept of the parkrun tourist, extending the reach of parkrun scholarship to sports tourist studies, accommodating notions of parkrun tourism within the wider realm of sports tourism, and strengthening the conceptualisation of sports tourism as a result. Once simply a global sporting movement that was firmly rooted in community, in recent years, the wider reach of parkrunners has been encouraged and promoted by commercial providers of adventure sport, parkrun LTD and informal groups of parkrunners. Accommodating parkrun tourism within the wider field of sports tourism has been the objective of this paper, achieved by the re-conceptualisation of the field to accommodate the challenges that parkrun presents.

Notes


2. Throughout the paper, we report on parkrun evidence that has been published by parkrun and, to a lesser extent, Exodus Travels. We also draw on our awareness of debates on ‘parkrun tourism’ among the wider parkrun community. Our concern is with the presentation of parkrun tourism and parkrun and the narratives that are conveyed, rather than the veracity of the claims. Our interest
arises from a larger project that explored well-being among Strava-using parkrunners (Tulle et al., 2018).

19. Freedom runs, so-called by parkrun, are runs completed independently around parkrun courses out with parkrun events.

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Further reading


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Beyond the horizon of words: silent landscape experience within spiritual retreat tourism

Ellina Mourtazina

Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the notion and function of silent landscape in a touristic experience by presenting the findings of a study on silent retreats in a Buddhist meditation retreat center in Northern India.

Design/methodology/approach – This study adopted a sensory ethnography approach applied through interviews and participant observation methods conducted during and after nine retreats in a meditation center.

Findings – This study suggests that silent landscapes are not only backdrops of touristic experiences but can be considered as inter-subjective performative and resourceful milieu of engagement that intertwine intimate embodied experiences with broader social and cultural values.

Originality/value – Despite landscapes having been thoroughly investigated in tourist studies, this paper underlines the pertinence of mobilizing the lens of other forms of presences such as affects, embodiment, sensoriality and sonority to understand the inter-relation between tourists-selves and the surrounding world encountered during their travels.

Keywords Spiritual retreat tourism, Silent landscapes, Soundscape, Spirituality, Sensory ethnography, Immobility

Paper type Case study

Introduction

Whether through the quest for authenticity (MacCannell, 1976) for inner sacred journey (Graburn, 1977) or for social valorization (Boyer, 1999), tourism has often been portrayed as a modern ritual that incorporates the existential promises of self-improvement and a potentiality for a better life. Following this meta-narrative, the tourism industry has traditionally embraced the Western liberal values of individual freedom of movement, thought and speech as a medium to become this better version of oneself (Butcher, 2003). Today, travel often remains portrayed as an individual choice, an act of emancipation from everyday structures, from bodily constraints or from prescribed moral values (Smith and Duffy, 2003; Stephenson and Bianchi, 2014). Destinations are romanticized as space-times wherein the expansion of one's own individuality prevails. In contrast, restraint behaviors such as physical immobility and self-discipline appear incompatible with vacations considering their close relationship to the working world. In the same vein, the discipline of silence is associated to a restriction on pleasure, a limit imposed upon self-expression and a deprivation of acquired fundamental individual social rights. However, in the past decades, with the growing trend of slow travel and spiritual-oriented journeys (Badone and Roseman, 2004; Cusack and Norman, 2014), an increasing number of tourists, mainly from societies dominated by Western liberalism and cultural capitalism, opt for secluded types of landscapes as settings for their free time on vacation. Labeled by the tourism industry as...
retreat tourism, such types of travel assign positive merit to seclusion, monotony, slowness and stillness. Among the plethora of religious, spiritual, medical or leisure institutions that underpin existing retreat facilities, silent landscapes in particular are commodified as beneficial and healing environments. In various retreat settings, narratives about silent acoustics and the self-discipline of silence are imbued with transformative properties. The performance of silence is perceived as an intimate embodied process through which individuals set forth on an inner transformational journey leading to the acquisition of inner wholeness, well-being and ultimately a state of happiness. In these narratives, surfeit of social and individual freedom is portrayed as a source of dissipation and an obstacle to inner peace and self-transformation.

Drawing on a case study of silent Buddhist meditation retreats in Northern India, this paper presents a phenomenologically inspired ethnographic account of the way tourists engage physically, socially, mentally and affectively with silent landscapes, and how they navigate the network of social values ascribed to them. It investigates how tourists deal with the commodified positive virtues ascribed to silence by the Buddhist meditation retreat center and their own emotions such as fear, apprehension or excitement that arise during the retreat. More broadly, to productively engage with the retreats’ lifeworlds, this paper heeds the emergent call to attend to ordinary in-betweens — unremarked, mundane experiences that are imbued with sensoriality (Ehn and Löfgren, 2010; Jackson, 2013; Stoller, 2009). By bringing awareness to the often-unnoticed scapes of sounds and silences, the intention of this paper is to show that these are not merely backgrounds to touristic activities but inter-subjective realities that constitute individual experiences.

This paper will first address methodological considerations for a study of a silent environment. Silent landscapes are situated within a broader scholarly literature on tourism and landscape and within the current emerging trend of spiritual retreat tourism analysis. Data analysis will follow the rhythms of the retreat experience by tracing its temporal unfolding from the moment participants arrive at the center to the moment of exit.

Data collection and study context

This paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the framework of the author’s doctoral research carried out at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, over a period of seven months spanning 2016–2019 in the Tushita Meditation Center. The Center is situated in the periphery of Dharamsala – a touristic destination located at the foot of the Indian-Himalayan region. Often referred to as “Little Lhasa,” the town is famous for serving as the residence of the 14th Dalai Lama and the home of a large Tibetan diasporic community. The Tushita Meditation Center contributes and benefits from the local popularity of Tibetan culture and Buddhism and is also part of the broader international non-profit religious organization Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). The FPMT comprises a network of over 150 centers around the world. During the high touristic season, the Center offers various activities and courses, including a “10 days introduction to Buddhism” tailored for those interested in learning the basics of Buddhist philosophy and meditation practices. Courses are organized once or twice per month and bring together 100 participants on average.

If conducting an ethnography of a silent environment is methodologically challenging, it also opens up opportunities to explore different ways of collecting data by focusing on the sensorial, embodied and affective dimensions of lived experiences during the retreat. Therefore, classical methods of participant observation and interviews were implemented by favoring a sensorial approach that considers the analysis of embodied experience as fundamental to the understanding of human participation in a cultural world (Csordas, 1994; Howes, 2006; Pink, 2009; Stoller, 1997). Participant observation was conducted during nine retreats of introductory and intermediate levels. The absence of verbal exchanges or other direct social interactions encouraged the researcher to cultivate what Pink (2009) calls a
“reflexive appreciation of one’s own sensorium” (p. 59). Questions such as “what do you see, smell, hear, touch or taste?” guided participatory observations. Attention was also paid to the embodied presence of others to the temporalities of their movements, to their spatial deployments and use of surrounding materialities. Interviews were conducted with 43 individuals who participated to a 10-day introduction to Buddhism retreat. This sample consisted of participants mainly from “Western culture societies,” aged 18 to 67 and novices to Tibetan Buddhism. The author is aware that this terminology is highly problematic, given the increasing number of individuals from regions of South America, China, Central Asia or Russia, in addition to those participants from Europe, North America or Australia. Therefore, in the context of this study, Western culture is used to delineate individuals from the milieu dominated by Western liberalism and cultural capitalism and for whom Buddhism is not the historical heritage religion.

To respect the silence policy of the meditation center, interviews took place shortly before and after the retreat periods. Whenever possible, post-retreat interviews took place in the physical perimeter of the Center. Walks performed through dorms, meditation halls, refectory, bathrooms and library – immersion within the materiality of space was used as a sensory stimulus that helped interviewees access sensory memories of their recent daily experiences and to engage in reflexive self-exploration. Ethnographic materials are analyzed through the lens of sensory categories such as smell, taste, sight, hearing and touch. The use of sensory modalities and the cultural values attached to them by participants helped to understand the experiential, imaginative and emotional manner in which individuals engage with the silent environment of a retreat.

Tourism and silent landscapes

In tourism studies, the notion of landscape has often been identified as a useful medium to understand the relation between the tourist-selves and the surrounding world encountered during their travels (Terkenli, 2002). Traditionally, this articulation has been scrutinized through the lens of visuality and gazing activities such as sightseeing, photography or museum visits (Aitchison, 2002; Crouch and Lübren, 2003; Urry, 1990). But because the sensory turn occurred in social sciences, the notion of landscape lost its exclusively static, objective and visually dominant connotations (Cosgrove, 1984; Jackson, 1997; Winer and Bender, 2001; Wylie, 2007). This paradigm change has led to an alternative understanding of landscape as a practical, inter-subjective enactment imbued with meaning and as an intimate, affective, embodied experience of places (Ingold, 1993; Tilley, 2017; Wylie, 2007). As developed by Wylie (2007), efforts to understand landscape “as a milieu of engagement and involvement [...] as a “lifeworld,” as a world to live in, not a scene to view.” (p. 49) created room to consider not only tangible and visible presences but also everything that is in between, i.e. the invisibles: imagination, memories, daydreams and silences. It brought to the forefront the unquestioned backdrop zones that hitherto escaped immediate awareness.

This shift from an ocularcentric approach to a more sensory-integrated one (Crouch and Desforges, 2003; Edensor, 1998) not only created room for the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) but also for the tourist ear (Gibson and Connell, 2005) and for the cultural interpretations of acoustic environments. Following this trend, a community of scholars focused on the way soundscapes are commodified as positive cultural resources toward the promotion of a touristic destination. For example, Gray’s (2018) work showed how in Lisbon, following the recent tourism boom, the genre of Fado underwent cultural branding. Gibson and Connell (2005) paid attention to music tourism, to show how blues music in Memphis reconfigured the city space into touristic and non-touristic areas. Others mobilized soundscapes perceived as noise and nuisances, to address the tensions occurring in touristic encounters. For example, research on urban tourism and the night-time economy has...
demonstrated how high sound volume was perceived negatively by some locals and paired with disruptive over-crowding, price increases or street crime (Colomb and Novy, 2016).

The relationship between silent landscapes and tourism encompasses the constellation of ideas surrounding the phenomenon of slow tourism, well-being and spiritual journeys. Research in these inter-related fields point to a renewed interest for silence which is often constructed as a resource for the touristic quests for simplicity, stillness, disconnection or wilderness and a counterpart to hectic urban life. For example, in discussing rural tourism in Estonia, Kaaristo (2014) seized upon the concept of the rural sound idyll – an aggregate of selected and idealized sounds that possess peace and tranquility virtues – to discuss the manner in which it is constructed in negation to urbanity and attributed to nature. In the spiritual register, Davidsson Bremborg’s (2013) analysis of pilgrimage revival in Sweden discusses the use of silence as an experiential process that provides opportunities to experience nature, to escape from social imperatives of speaking and to reflect on one’s own existential questions. Jaworski and Thurlow’s (2010) case study of luxury tourism is also revealing, in which silent landscapes as twined with a quest for stillness and disconnection are commodified as the key metaphor for creating a sense of exclusivity and privilege for a globalized super-elite. Despite this recent recognition of the importance of silent landscapes in some tourist niches, scholarly research remains mainly focused on the way silence is commodified or socially constructed as a positive background to the touristic experience.

With attention being paid mainly to discourses pertaining to sounds and silence, the actual way individuals of engaging experientially, sensorially, emotionally and cognitively with them requires further analysis. To understand the interaction between silence and the tourist-selves, in the context of this study, silent landscapes are first apprehended as an experiential process undergone by participants: as physical, emotional and social states of being induced by the act of not speaking. Second, silent landscapes are defined as a result produced by the discipline of not speaking. The silent landscape – as a particular soundscape – is a culturally constructed aggregate of sounds emanating from nature, bodily presences and distant urbanscapes.

**Spiritual retreat tourism**

Over the past decades, scholarly literature on religion or tourism has witnessed a global resurgence of travel motivated by spiritual quests (Badone and Roseman, 2004; Cusack and Norman, 2014; Eddy, 2013; Norman, 2011; Timothy and Olsen, 2006). To understand this renewed interest, a great deal of attention has been paid to pilgrimages, which fundamental assumption is based on a physical displacement to sacred places. Spiritual journeys were scrutinized through the lens of movement, with less attention paid to other form of religious performances such as retreats which are more oriented toward physical immobility and stillness of body speech and mind. Nonetheless, retreats have become increasingly popular since the 1980s (Eddy, 2013; Stausberg, 2011). Social restructuration inherent to secularization influenced this development. The double movement of deinstitutionalization and subjectification of beliefs and practices in various religious contexts (Hervieu-Léger, 2010) led to a paradoxical phenomenon; as monastic vocations are in free fall, the temporal experience of monastic lifestyles attract increasingly heterogenous groups (Gilli and Palmisano, 2017; Van Tongeren, 2014). This eagerness to seek out a monastic type of experience is motivated by the urge to retreat from the mayhem of contemporary everyday life and the longing to retreat into an introspective state of mind. In response to such transformations, in different religious contexts, structures such as abbeys, monasteries, ashrams or centers became accessible to visitors.

Within the Buddhist tradition, various international organizations established in the 1960s carried out extensive interpretative work to adapt Buddhist practices as to respond to the preoccupations of the modern western world (Lopez, 2002; McMahan, 2008; Schedneck,
2017). In what Lopez (2002) called Modern Buddhism – characterized by values of rationalism, empiricism and universalism – meditation practices and retreats have acquired a new centrality. Charismatic figures such as Thich Nhat Hanh (Order of Interbeing), S.N. Goenka (Vipassana Meditation) and Lama Thubten Yeshe (FPMT) have established retreat courses in their respective networks tailored for lay people, referred to by Falcone (2018) as non-heritage Buddhist practitioners. The 10-day retreat format initially developed by S.N. Goenka has enjoyed worldwide reproduction and popularity.

The FPMT is the largest Tibetan Buddhist organization (outside Tibet) within the lineage of Lama Tsongkhapa and part of the Gelugpa School (Cresswell, 2010). It is one of the first Tibetan Buddhist movements to focus on Westerners by developing educational retreats centered on Buddhism and meditation teachings (Schedneck, 2017). Over the course of the retreat participants must follow the Five Lay Precepts of Buddhism which are abstain from killing living beings; abstain from taking that which is not given; abstain from sexual misconduct; abstain from telling lies; and abstain from all intoxicants. In addition to that, there is an obligation to respect the noble silence, dress respectfully (no shorts above the knee, tank-top shirts or tight and revealing clothing), no use of technological devices (phone, computer, camera) and no sport activities. Staff members including lay people, nuns and monks must uphold the prescribed behaviors.

Data analysis and discussion: stages of a silent experience

In the following section, the touristic experience of a silent landscape is discussed through six key themes: rules of silence, social awkwardness, discovering the presence of others, sense of vastness, daydreaming and return to normality. Those mental, affective, social and embodied states are experienced in highly individualized manners, separately or mixed, in different order and at different moments of the retreat.

Rules of silence

Along the woody path that leads to Tushita, the Buddhist meditation retreat center, boards remind visitors that they have entered a silent zone. At the main building, an English language quote from the FPMT brochure is displayed. It is a message from the main spiritual leader, H.H the 14th Dalai Lama: “Silence is sometimes the best answer.” For many participants who were moved to travel to the FPMT Center by inner existential questionings, this sentence resonates as inaugural advice aimed to guide their silence experience to come. During the check-in process that introduces participants to the various common rules of the course, a staff member nun presents silence as a golden rule and implies that its benefits only befall those who experience it. According to the Buddhist teachings taught by the Center, silenced atmospheres allow to “slow down” everyday rhythms and most importantly create inner space for a better understanding of mechanisms of thought and emotion. Silence is communicated as a setting that has the ability to alter one’s inner engagement with time and space. However, the challenging aspects of silence are not denied. It is prescribed as a demanding discipline and as a process achieved by stages that requires daily resolve. For freshly arrived participants, visual and verbal regulations of the soundscape contribute to inscribing silence within the material reality of the retreat space.

Rebecca is a 31-year-old woman from Spain and Brazil. After participating in several retreats (including the mandatory 10-day introduction course), she became a voluntary staff member. After spending almost a year working in Tushita, Rebecca expressed the feeling that the numerous retreats hosted by the Center have imbued the place with the capacity to emit a performative and soothing atmosphere:

There is an imprint of silence in this place, you can actually feel it, it’s a special atmosphere […] Here your monkey mind, your unsettled and confused mind is calmed down.
She explained. In this sense, silent landscape is valued as a *therapeutic landscape* (Kearns and Gesler, 1998), a place that has achieved “lasting reputations for providing physical, mental and spiritual healing” (p. 8). It is structured not as an empty *medium* between the self and the surrounding world but as a performative condition that allows introspection.

**Social awkwardness**

Nevertheless, in recalling her first “10-day Introduction to Buddhism Course” Rebecca mentioned:

> It was the first time that I was confined. It was a challenge because I love talking. I speak many languages and the more I communicate the better I feel. And the first day I was whispering to myself, “what I am doing here? Why are you doing this to yourself, are you crazy? But at the same time I knew that it would be beneficial for me.

Before the retreat, many participants fear not being able to handle silence. In Rebecca’s case, the first retreat is strongly influenced by what Turner (1969) identified as a *communitas* dynamic. Individuals who share a common cosmopolitan identity find themselves enrolled in a liminal temporality. During check-in, participants describe a feeling of belonging to a group that is about to embark on the same exploratory journey, thereby partaking together in an atmosphere of sharing, togetherness and excitation before departure. When the silence begins, in a situation of great physical and emotional proximity, not being able to communicate creates, at first, a profound sense of social awkwardness and discomfort. Some individuals were confronted with a growing fear of feeling isolated, inappropriate, antisocial or rude. There is also the fear of missing out on a *togetherness* moment that might be the highlight of the whole journey. Charlotte, one of the participants from Belgium, described her first impression:

> The first day I really didn’t know how to behave with people. I tried to avoid every gaze, every contact and I hugged walls. During lunch I didn’t want to eat on big tables, I stayed alone. I actually felt quite lost and disoriented at first.

Sharing a meal with six people without having a conversation or even looking at them, holding the door to someone without expressing usual formulas of courtesy, not asking who is the last one in the queue for the bathroom and still waiting in the line hoping to have rightly interpreted the situation – all such unusual social behaviors disturb participants’ ordinary patterns. Quotidian modes of interacting and being with others that were previously unreflectively carried out are broken. The sudden absence of socially inscribed *micro-verbal* interactions which usually regulate routines creates a sense of social inconsistency.

As mentioned by Ehn and Löfgren (2010), in our daily, often unnoticed routines, social patterning based on verbal communication creates a sense of social cohesion, stability and continuity (p. 422). Words serve as useful mediators to create interconnectedness with others by channeling and selecting adequate categories of thoughts that seem situation appropriate. In the context of the retreat, where language (and its selective process) is suddenly forbidden, the feeling of being lost emerges. The absence of verbal interaction in a situation that strongly demands it undermines the feeling of its social human essence and provokes a sense of social divisiveness, inconsistency and awkwardness. In being cut off from others, the relationship to the self and one’s own individuality is destabilized. “Even if the person was sitting next to me I first had the impression that a barrier was standing between us. We were in parallel universes.” (Miguel, Chile)

During the second phase, participants try to find balance between their social discomfort experienced through silence and broader positive conventionalized values ascribed to it by the Buddhist center. This process of negotiation is experienced as a dilemma. Many
participants were struggling with questions such as: Why are doing this to yourself? Is it really worth it? Is it the right solution to improve myself? Should I stay or should I leave?

**Discovering the presences of other**

Progressively, the states of “extraordinariness” and “awkwardness” owing to silence are routinized. Behaviors that first seemed unusual and extraordinary are gradually normalized. As speech – the human dominant mode of communication and being in the world – is silenced, other minor realities are automatically moved to the forefront of awareness. Alexander, a 23-year-old Dutch who traveled India for two months explained:

> With silence it’s like a reset of your brain. By stopping talking you have the experience of how it is to just experience the world, just seeing without labeling and you start to see so many things!

In a retreat context, silence and non-verbalization render all the realities of the surrounding world equally present to the observer.

During the daily meditation session performed in the main hall, participants sit side by side and meditate on cushions neither moving nor using words. Minutes pass, and just as the eyes get accustomed to the darkness, they start to distinguish shades and forms – ears begin to distinguish and pay attention to other sound nuances that progressively fill the entire room. Sounds of silence emerge. Amongst them, a huge range of bodily sounds emanate from the 100 participants co-present in the room: sounds of coughing, throat clearing, sniffing, sneezing, swallowing, nose blowing, stomach sounds, breathing, scratching, stretching and so on. The bodily presence of others and the space between are brought to the foreground of physical reality. Distances between bodies are scrutinized and perceived as near, far, too close, too distant, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Outdoor sounds such as birds, monkey and car horns from the distant city also come into play. Other sensorial presences appear as well: incenses that are occasionally lit, flavors of neighbors’ tea, one’s own body odors and that of others. Hitherto unnoticed, small gestures dissimulated by language gain importance and surface to the forefront of awareness. They become tangible and perceptible parts of the mindscape.

If such sensuous realities enjoy heightened presence, they are not perceived as neutral. As intersubjective processes, sounds, smells and bodily co-presences produced during meditation sessions are strongly informed by personal social, cultural and emotional meaning systems. As mentioned by Stoller (2009), “Although one’s embodied perception of an encounter might well be unsystematic and unstructured, it has always been historically, socially, and politically situated” (p. 33). For many participants from Western culture, bodily sounds during meditation sessions were perceived as disturbing noises that activated disgust sensitivities. Moreover, they were regarded as noises that failed to be repressed and a source of distraction from meditation. Line, a 37-year-old participant from New York, USA, told me:

> The first meditations, I was very annoyed by a person behind me whose breathing was loud. It was loud and irregular. But then I realized, ‘you are angry because he breathes? It’s ridiculous. So I started to integrate this into my practice, to turn it into something useful. (Line, USA)

The perception of such acoustic elements is also influenced and legitimized by broader moral values produced by the FPMT’s Buddhist framework. In courses on Buddhist philosophy taught during the retreat, teachers encourage stillness of body, speech and mind but also promote the values such as patience and compassion toward others and oneself. The perceived difficulties of co-dwelling are encouraged to be seen as opportunities to practice “virtuous behaviors.” The perception of newly discovered sensorial dimensions is entangled in a dual system of values. It is overlappingly experienced as a source of irritation and disgust and as a source of personal improvement through acceptance and tolerance of aural presences.
Sense of vastness

After a few days of retreat, once the newly learned routines sink into the body and mind, the silent landscape becomes a safe space from which existential self-reflection can begin. In highly individualized manners, participants described that silence and an introspective state of mind create the impression of “amplitude” and space – a distortion of their usual manner of perceiving realities. This feeling of vastness correspond to a broadened perception of mental, physical, temporal and emotional inner space that allows participants to create opportunities to adjust one’s way of committing to the surrounding world. For example, the metaphor of an inner voyage across unknown spaces was often solicited. Alexander explained:

It’s funny you spent ten days in the Center, and it’s just like traveling, you go into your own mind and from there, to places you’ve never been before. I just feel it’s a whole new world that opens up where you can travel. And you can go in so many directions, it’s up to you, there is no limit.
(Alexander, Netherlands)

The expanding feeling of inner vastness, intimate space and time malleability can seem paradoxical in a context where physical proximity, seclusion, discipline and austerity prevail. Confronting participants to this paradox, Alexander answered:

It is not about the way it looks but just the way it feels. Even if you’re very close to people and from outside it can seem like a prison, you can actually feel freedom.

Regarding this articulation between physical narrowness and the imaginary of vastness, in “La poétique de l’espace,” Bachelard (1957) mentioned that an intense feeling of vastness can arise out of highly intimate and enclosed places.

Non-verbal interactions reinforce the feeling of vastness, as it lowers barriers between the self and others. The usual social categories that allow to distinguish and create delimitation between the self and others are relegated to the background. In a secluded and silenced space – being a wife, a mother, a co-worker, a sister, a national citizen, a speaker of a given language, of a certain age, of a political orientation – are not the categories with which one identifies others and experiences oneself. Dissociation from social roles strengthens the feeling of inner vastness and is often experienced as a momentary relief from social responsibilities. As mentioned by Hans, a participant from Switzerland:

Being silent creates room for introspection and exploration of yourself. You mind is not filled with buzzy thoughts about your job or family […] It’s an opportunity to see what is really inside, to clean up a little bit and to rearrange its priorities.

Physical and sensorial co-presence is the only way participants grapple with each other’s presences. Individuals are not aware of their dorm neighbor’s country, what language they speak, if they are here alone or with friends or partners or what profession they practice. But they are familiar with the flavor of the tea they drink in the morning, their bedtime habits, their shower schedule and their meditation postures.

This feeling of vastness is not lived by participants as an empty “non-event,” enjoyed merely as an inner pleasant state. It carries ontological potentialities to engage in personal change. In his work on *in between places*, Stoller (2009) argues that liminality has a great creative power to question “things most deeply human” and to underscore “the existential multiplicities of social life in a complex world” (p. 6). Following this thought, the inner sense of essential space that emerged during the liminality of silence and meditation provides opportunities to space out and to rearrange elements of existence, to notice and correct responses to external stimuli. Many interviews showed that it is precisely this lack of space and time induced by the acceleration of modern life that motivated participants to partake in retreat. Despite a rich social, emotional and economic life, there is a sense of inner voidness. Therefore, participants were first looking for an outer space to disconnect from
social responsibilities and to slow down contemporary rhythms, then an inner space to change, to unlearn and to question usual modes of behavior.

**Daydreaming**

The retreat area, which began as an abstract, circumscribed place, a progressively routinized and internalized space, wherein daydreaming and mind wandering – as a form of exploration of mental and embodied horizons (Caughey, 1984) – become an important aspect of a silent experience. François, a 65-year-old single French man who decided to travel after retirement, described one of the stories that he imagined during the retreat:

The fantasy took place in Paris, my hometown. There was a center like Tushita and I would have been one of the staff members. There was also this nice blond woman that was sitting next to me during the meditation (laughs). I don’t know if she speaks French, but I imagined that we both were working in the Center together. (François, France)

These daydreams constitute a patchwork fed by memories, hopes for the future, the bodily presence of others, natural surroundings of the Center and Buddhist practices and teachings learned during the course. In a retreat context where participants have time with(in) themselves, daydreaming is not only an escape from a tedious routine or a way to fill up the empty mind spaces. Guided by the wish to transform one’s inner and outer life, the participants’ fantasized narratives aid the process of individuality building in one’s biographical itinerary. It is an opportunity to indulge in playful fantasies, memories, expectations and observations; the essential mind mechanisms around which existence unfolds. The creation of imagined stories can also be understood as a direct application of what has been learned and experienced during the retreat; a way to process and introduce it into one’s own system. In his work on “empty” moments in a touristic experience, Löfgren (2008) states that the seemingly trivial activities of daydreaming “are often ways of working out basic themes in life” (p. 91). This viewpoint is further echoed by Ehn and Löfgren (2010), who state that “[Daydreaming] is also a way to mold everyday life, fabricate biographies, plan and rehearse future action, and recapitulate past events (p. 234).” Silent landscapes, as a liminality, become what Paul Stoller called “a space of creative imagination, of provocative linkages […] of personal improvement” (2009, p. 6). The imaginative dimension of a silent landscape can thus be understood as an existential movement toward, an unfolding of the present self. In Rose’s (2006) words, it is a “dream of presence.”

**Return to normality**

The final day, the imminent end of the retreat and the breaking of silence are present in participants’ minds. Some participants fear the impending situation and hide for as long as possible in isolated sectors of the retreat area. Others dress up in order “to meet” fellows with whom they have spent the previous 10 days. What’s your name? Where are you from? – are followed by a polite “nice to meet you.” These usual courtesies sound strange to the assembly as they reveal identities again and delimit the contour of social selves:

The first moment of talking I didn’t enjoy it that much. When people start talking, it felt instantly that differences and borders exist between us. It was disturbing. During the silence I really had the impression of a common ground, but when we started speaking, division occurred. (Alexander, Netherlands)

According to participants, first words hardly reflected the intensity of freshly lived experience. “I connected with people less with words than with silence” (Alexander, Netherlands). Such difficulties to put words on lived experience of silence are expressed bodily with hugs, smiles and gazes.

Despite initial social discomfort, within one hour, the retreat’s soundspace became a cacophony imbued with voices. Participants start to eagerly discover other aspects of their
fellow participants’ identities. Participants from same countries or same language gather and try to find common cultural references. Progressively, alone or in newly created groups, tourists leave the area, and the meditation center becomes empty and silent once again.

Conclusion

This paper investigated the enclosed world of a silent retreat and interrogated the ways tourists who experience silent landscapes move through different pleasant/unpleasant psychological and emotional states of engagement: excitement, apprehension, social awkwardness, familiarization, introspection and togetherness. The interplay between states of consciousness and outer normative discourses provided by retreat facilities, and with broader internalized social and cultural imperatives ascribed to silence, were commented on. As resources, silent landscapes create essential space for introspective work, allowing for the discovery of other forms of social bonding and of being in the world. As such, liminal spaces and the states of in betweenness experienced therein are rife with self-transformative potential.

Broadly speaking, this paper emphasized that in a touristic context, silent landscapes, and soundscapes in general, are not merely empty backgrounds for individual actions but performative elements inherent to the co-production of touristic experiences. As an intersubjective process that creates a relational space and as a meeting point between the individual and one’s surrounding world, silence exercises its influence on broader cultural and social representations. Sounds that emerge from silences are always situated and related to their contextual emplacement. Depending on the context, values and imaginaries attributed to them, silent landscapes are generative of a diverse range of experiences. Silences that permeate the desert, the sea, nature, nighttime and the first-class coach create different ambiances and states of being given their situatedness and social connotations, requiring more attention to be paid to their sensorial dimension.

References


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Coimbra as a literary tourism destination: landscapes of literature

Silvia Quinteiro, Vivina Carreira and Alexandra Rodrigues Gonçalves

Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the relevance of developing literary tourism in Coimbra.
Design/methodology/approach – This exploratory qualitative research identifies existent resources and development potential of literary tourism. The instruments of data collection were bibliographic research, questionnaires, interviews and participant observation.
Findings – There are few literary tourism products in Coimbra, which contrasts with the number of literary places identified, namely, on the left bank of the River Mondego. Tourism development stakeholders in Coimbra have not paid enough attention to the emergence of literary tourism and the opportunities for the development of new sustainable cultural products related with it.
Research limitations/implications – This study is limited by the size and continual renewal of the corpus, which implies a constant updating of data regarding authors and texts.
Practical implications – This study will lead to the production of a database of Coimbra’s literary resources and a digital literary map, allowing any citizen or entity to design and implement literary tourism products.
Originality/value – To the best of authors’ knowledge, this is the first study reviewing the potential of Coimbra as a literary tourism destination. Moreover, it discusses literary heritage as a source of products and experiences to foster more balanced tourist flows throughout the city.
Keywords Literary tourism, Cultural tourism, Literary landscape, Niche tourism, Literary destination, Creative tourism, Coimbra

1. Introduction

Literary tourism is commonly recognised as a part of cultural tourism (Baleiro and Quinteiro, 2018; Hoppen, 2011; Magadán Díaz and Rivas García, 2011; Richards, 1996; Robinson and Andersen, 2002) or of heritage tourism (Squire, 1996; Herbert, 2001). Butler (2000, p. 360) has defined literary tourism as “the form of tourism in which the primary motivation for visiting specific locations is related to interest in literature”. Along the same lines, literary tourism has been defined as the practise of visiting places associated with writers and their texts (Watson, 2009) and as a form of tourism which is “associated with places celebrated for literary depictions and/or connections with literary figures” (Squire, 1996, p. 119). That is, practicing literary tourism means travelling to the places of literature, the “literary places” (Herbert, 2001) associated with authors’ biographies and their works. Busby and Klug’s definition of literary tourism adds the idea that this practise depends on the popularity of authors and texts. Literary tourism is a phenomenon that:

[…] originates when the popularity of literary depiction or the stature of an individual author is such that people are drawn to visit the places that he/she wrote about or was associated with (Busby and Klug, 2001, p. 319).

However, we must also acknowledge the fact that not only very famous and canonical authors have the potential to create literary tourist attractions. As stated by the French
philosopher Michel Onfray, “just one line from even an average author awakens more desire for the described place than photographs or even films, videos or reports” (Onfray, 2007, p. 26, our translation).

Assuming that “[t]ourism is about producing destinations” (Crang, 2011, p. 211) and destinations are “rendered into things that [can] be apprehended through a specific way of seeing and people [are] trained in that way of seeing” (Crang, 2011, p. 212), we aim to contribute to the empowerment of the city of Coimbra (Portugal) as a literary tourism destination. Firstly, we developed a diagnosis of the state of literary tourism in Coimbra, and tried to understand the work presently carried out by local and regional actors (Municipality, Tourism and Culture entities were consulted). Simultaneously, we collected the texts, itineraries and other documents that enable us to build a database with resources related to potential literary tourism products and experiences. Thus, starting from the literary mapping of the physical space, based on the places of the authors and the places of the texts, we will create and make available a digital map which, in addition to identifying the places of literature, will also allow the user to select suggested literary tourism pathways. From this map, which will be made freely available, it will be possible to develop tourist, cultural and educational activities. Tourism promoters, destination management organisations and other stakeholders will be able to develop literary-based cultural tourism products, benefiting from the fact that the literary “visualisation” of the geographical landscape helps to create places, and to increase the pull factor for the place associated with literary texts.

This article is structured as follows: firstly, we will discuss the notions of cultural tourism, special interest tourism and niche tourism; we will then move on to analysing literary tourism, creative experiences, as well as to present a reflection on literary landscapes. After introducing the context of this study and the methods of data collection, the analysis section of this paper is dedicated to the literary landscape of Coimbra and its potential as a literary tourism destination, followed by the conclusions.

2. Literary tourism as cultural niche tourism

Cultural tourism stems from a process of various behavioural practices developed by societies, which includes learning and transmitting meanings incorporated in objects or cultural activities. The beginning of cultural tourism as a social phenomenon and an object of academic study can be traced back to the boom in leisure travel following World War II (Richards, 2018). The growth of cultural tourism, oriented and practised by an informed clientele, continued from the 1960s to the 1980s, when the then World Tourism Organization (WTO) (1985) presented its first definition of cultural tourism. More recent definitions have been advanced by scholars (inter alia Barbieri and Mahoney, 2010; Du Cros and McKercher, 2014; Richards, 1996). The current UNWTO definition is as follows:

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions (UNWTO, 2017, p. 18).

In 2005, McKercher and Chan showed the relevance of a better understanding of motivations and activities experienced by tourists during their holidays. Results from studies undertaken in different countries into cultural tourism tendencies showed that a more accurate system of measurement was needed (McKercher and Chan, 2005, p. 21). The past decades have witnessed an increase in the use of culture and creativity to market tourism destinations, as culture has come to be seen as a resource that allows for the creation of differentiated content for tourism and tourism, in turn, offers new opportunities for cultural institutions and products. The perceived changes in the demand for cultural tourism
were recently confirmed by the UNWTO Report on Tourism and Culture Synergies (2018). These changes derive from the different uses or approaches to culture: from Culture 1.0/Cultural Tourism 1.0 (Grand Tour and consumption by a small elite) to Culture 2.0/Cultural Tourism 2.0 (culture as industry and mass cultural tourism) to Culture 3.0/Cultural Tourism 3.0 (culture as a platform for tourism and vice versa, as well as a means of creating identity), stimulating social cohesion and supporting creativity (UNWTO, 2018). The study reveals that 89% of national tourism entities specifically focus on cultural tourism. This report also provides empirical evidence for the dimension of the cultural tourism market, which accounted for 39% of all international holiday travel in 2017 or around 516 million journeys.

Dissatisfaction with traditional tourism development models and the trend towards massification of traditional cultural tourism has triggered a demand for alternative cultural tourism products. As a result, niche tourism has emerged to serve an increasing number of tourists (Novelli and Benson, 2015) demanding specialist products, with enhanced value for smaller groups of customers. The original meaning of the word “niche” is a recessed space or hollow. In the sense we use it here, the term “niche” comes from the business area and has been applied in various fields, often in relation to marketing. Some words that are associated with this concept are “small”, “specialized”, and “special”. Daligic and Leeuw (1994, p. 40) define “niche marketing” as a “small market consisting of an individual customer or a small group of customers with similar characteristics or needs”. Companies that focus on niche products seek to identify products or services tailored to their customers (Linneman and Stanton, 1991), targeting their activities at a smaller part of the market, with few customers and competitors (Huh and Singh, 2007), using the company’s expertise, product differentiation, strong communication strategy and customer focus (Kotler, 2003). The most frequent justification presented for niche marketing has been the need to implement rejuvenation strategies, the opportunity to enhance the product’s image through product or service differentiation and to focus on communication with the customers. This is no different in the tourism industry, with the segmentation and sub-segmentation that the past decades have witnessed in this field. Destinations can specify what they offer and differentiate their tourism products to thrive in an increasingly competitive and cluttered tourism environment (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002).

While certain niche segments, such as cultural heritage, sport and adventure tourism, are widely known and easily recognisable, there are others listed under newly born micro-niches, such as photographic, genealogy and research tourism. In relation to this, whether the niche is established or emerging, it attracts growing numbers of visitors to a variety of destinations and is increasingly perceived as a way forward to facilitate sustainable tourism (Novelli and Benson, 2015, p. 248).

Literary tourism is amongst these emerging “micro-niches” that coincide with what Novelli defines as special interest tourism: “a form of tourism which involves consumers whose holiday choice is inspired by specific motivations and whose level of satisfaction is determined by the experience they pursue”. (Novelli, 2015, p. 13, see also Rittichainuwat, 2018). This approach is very appropriate for our work because the “larger referral market” of cultural tourism is well established in Coimbra, even more so as it became a World Heritage Site in 2013. Consequently, there are concerns that these tourism drives have contributed to an excess of tourists in certain parts of the city, which poses difficult challenges regarding the management of some sites. In this case, the niche – literary tourism – is not to be seen as a strategy for developing a tourist destination, as happens in many places, but as a differentiated cultural tourist product capable of diverting tourists and visitors from the sites that are overcrowded.

The availability of a niche tourism product as a form of creative tourism, which may be based on literary tourism experiences or activities, aims to involve the tourist in participatory actions, activities that require some form of involvement – affective, artistic, cognitive, social. The concept of creative tourism was defined by Richards and Raymond (2000, p. 18) as “tourism
which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken”. This definition, according to Richards (2018), contains the key principles of creative tourism:

- offering opportunities for personal creative development;
- increasing engagement by enabling visitors and their hosts to be creative together; and
- linking the creative activities to the destination.

In fact, in the paradigm shift from traditional cultural tourism to creative cultural tourism there is also a shift from “looking” towards “becoming” (Richards and Wilson, 2007, p. 20) or of “looking” transformed into more lasting and more authentic experiences in the sense of “existential authenticity” (Wang, 1999, pp. 351–352), something undertaken by the individual as a participant in experiences that activate his/her existential state. When tourists are transformed through these experiences, their authenticity can hardly be denied, but this necessarily implies openness and a willingness to get involved (Landry, 2010). As literary tourism products are based on the associations between locations and authors, as well as literary works, in addition to highlighting the original and distinctive character of destinations, they can also provide situations in which activities and scenarios or landscapes interact to form a holistic tourist experience, summoning thoughts, memories, feelings and knowledge. They can also engender a connection in the tourist or visitor between past and present and between the places being visited and other places, by activating cultural and literary memory and creating opportunities for personal development through the enactment of narratives or poems in personal interpretations that can generate unforgettable and enriching experiences.

Regarding the development of experiences in which the literary tourist might actively be involved, it will be necessary to use the products and experiences presented in Table 1 with others. Examples are handicraft, writing, painting, music and cooking workshops, which can be made more innovative with the use of digital resources, as we propose below for the left bank of the Mondego river.

The table below shows a list of literary tourism products and experiences that can be developed, based on the relationship between literature and tourism.

The identified resources (Table 1) related to literary tourism can easily be used to provide more active and participatory visits, of a type associated with creative tourism and a more immersive and self-enriching experience for tourists.

3. Literary landscapes

Any landscape is a construct, a product of human (inter)action with space (Antrop, 2015; Buescu, 1990; Collot, 1995; Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Lowenthal, 1975; Negreiros et al., 2012; Wylie, 2007). It is a multifaceted product, which is simultaneously object, idea and representation (Knudsen et al., 2015) and which is conditioned by the presence of a subject in a space, by the range of his gaze, by the physical, historical, epistemological and even sentimental perspectives and constraints from which this portion of space is framed (Wylie, 2007). In fact, landscape, unlike nature, does not exist without humans (Maltzahn, 1994). It is the gaze (synecdoche of the subject in its uniqueness and subjectivity) that transforms the unintelligible amalgam of nature (and objects) that we call space, into a human production with its own meaning, i.e. landscape.

Antrop also considers the concept of landscape as a construct and says it:

[...] implies perception and preference as well as mental constructions, symbolism and affection. [...] Landscapes are the combined manifestation of the natural and cultural variety in the world in space and time (2015, p. 53).
The construction of landscape is not only based on visual perception. It is, in fact, the product of the subject’s gaze that contemplates it and the result of the intersection “of a mobile observer” (Cresswell, 2003, p. 275) with the physical space, either through the way he observes it or the way he lives it. Following the most recent theories in the area of human geography, according to which the study of space and landscape is also defined by the mobilities that occur within them (Cresswell, 2003, 2011; Crang, 2011), marking spaces on which tourist routes and itineraries are outlined means producing mobilities (Cresswell, 2011) and, consequently, producing landscapes. To be an agent in this process is to have the power to condition the gaze and the tourists’ and visitors’ paths, influencing the way they read it.

Like any other landscape, literary landscapes are also constructs and can be as numerous as the number of subjects and their viewpoints. It is not possible, for example, to speak of the tourist-literary landscape of Coimbra as a unit or even a finite number of landscapes. Indeed, considering the “metaphor of the landscape as a palimpsest, [and] how various representations of the landscape […] might add layers to the meanings of places”. (MacKenzie, 2017, p. 275), landscape emerges as an object that is constantly being updated and amenable to multiple other readings. It is an object to which each text and each author adds a layer of meaning that overlaps but does not erase the previous one. Therefore, the making of this inventory will always be a work in progress and the use of a digital tool that allows a permanent update of the information collected also ensures its immediate public availability.

Tourists look for and visit landscapes, they are moved by “a fascination with places that are unique, places which seem to offer a peek into a world other than one’s own”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Literary tourism products and experiences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visits to authors' houses</strong></td>
<td>Travel to visit the houses where authors were born, lived or died, the places where they wrote, the schools where they studied, the cafés, restaurants and hotels they went to, the churches where they were baptized, got married or had their funerary ceremonies and their graves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visits to the places of the literary text</strong></td>
<td>Travel to visit the places where the action unfolds, to see the statues of the characters, to visit the places where the work was written or the places where texts were staged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literary walks</strong></td>
<td>Tours through the authors’ and/or the characters’ places/routes. These tours can either have a guide or be self-guided. In these situations, tourists have a map-brochure that helps them follow the right route (sometimes there may be signs at each stopping point on the literary walk). These walks may include, amongst others, visits to libraries, visits to literary pubs, visits to bookshops or the participation in literary competitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visits to literary festivals</strong></td>
<td>Travel to participate in literary festival activities (lectures, dinners, walks and many other creative activities with writers and performers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visits to literary parks</strong></td>
<td>Visits to parks, whose design was inspired by literary texts and/or their authors. Most of these parks are associated with children’s literature, although parks for adults are increasingly common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stays in literary hotels</strong></td>
<td>Stays at hotels that are somehow related to literature, an author, a work or a character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stays in library-hotels</strong></td>
<td>Stays in hotels that have a strong literary connection because they place a vast book collection at the disposal of their guests. These spaces are meant to be privileged reading places, where guests can go on a literary retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visits to literary cities/villages/towns</strong></td>
<td>Visits to the UNESCO cities of literature and others that because of their strong association with literature can be classified as literary cities/villages/towns (such as the Book Town of Hay-on-Wye in Wales)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation in literary dinners</strong></td>
<td>Participation in dinners where an author, work or character is celebrated. The dishes that are served, the guests' outfits and the readings are all literary inspired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation in lectures and reading sessions</strong></td>
<td>Participation in reading sessions or lectures where an author, a text or a character is discussed and celebrated. In these sessions, the tourist can actively participate or just attend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance of literary text staging/performances</strong></td>
<td>The staging of texts in places associated with the text and/or the author. In these sessions, the tourist can actively participate or just attend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Adapted from Baleiro and Quinteiro (2018)
Based on Urry’s (1990) classic study, Wylie states that “landscape provokes travel” and that “the nascent tourist in search of exotic sights – renders the world as an object to be visually consumed […] as scenery, spectacle – in this sense as landscape” (2007, p. 133). Therefore, tourists must be given unique scenarios. Building a city’s literary map and producing heritage-based tourism resources generates unique landscapes and unrepeatable experiences mediated by literature, not replicable anywhere else on the planet.

Enjoying a literary tourism experience implies that tourists recognise literary markers on the ground (Baleiro and Quinteiro, 2018; Müller, 2001; Rojek, 1997), but this does not necessarily imply prior knowledge of the texts and the authors. Information can be provided to the tourist at the time of the visit, through a guide, brochure, app or signage at the location. Transforming a literary landscape into a tourist-literary landscape, therefore, implies that the landscape is considered as an object/tourist landscape (Knudsen et al., 2015) and that it responds to the needs of those who move there, by ensuring physical accessibility, transport, signage and tourist facilities.

4. Research phases and methods

Having defined the object of our research, the potential of Coimbra for the development of literary tourism, we have started by doing bibliographic research, trying to identify other studies that had already focussed on a similar case, and we have found none of this nature in the context of literary tourism. To understand the situation in the city of Coimbra within the national context as far as the supply of literary tourism is concerned, we began by surveying the existent literary tourism products on offer in Portugal, considering those that are currently accessible to visitors who wish to enjoy them (guided tours, itineraries, routes and other). Therefore, vague proposals that merely indicate the possibility of conducting literary tourism experiences, as is the case with the routes suggested by the website Visitportugal (2013), and one-off situations, were excluded.

To ascertain the situation in Portugal, we used four data collection instruments as follows:

- Questionnaires (sent to city councils and authors’ houses).
- Interviews (to official entities and tour promoters).
- Consultation of websites (especially those of Turismo de Portugal and of the Directorate-General for Books), Archives and Libraries (DGLAB), which lists all literary festivals that take place annually in Portugal.
- Participant observation (visits to the referenced literary places in Coimbra).

All the data collected were organised in a grid indicating the name, the promoter and the location where it can be found and, in the case of the authors’ houses and foundations, the nature of the relationship with the author (the house where the author was born, lived, where he/she worked or died).

With specific reference to Coimbra and the identification of literary tourism products in the city, the Central Regional Development Commission (CCDR) and the Turismo do Centro, the entity responsible for the majority of literary tourism products in the city, were also contacted, and provided all available data on Cultural Tourism on offer in Coimbra. As we aim to assess the potential for the implementation of literary tourism in this city, we are identifying literary places in Coimbra (presently only related to Portuguese authors) using four distinct instruments for data collection. We resorted to bibliographic research based on reading works on the history of the city (the main monuments, the university, historic cafes and fraternities), biographies of writers, essays on literary movements associated with Coimbra, collections of literary works about Coimbra, literary guides of Coimbra (particularly those by writers, such as Eugénio de Castro’s Guia de Coimbra (Guide of Coimbra), 1918),

(Knudsen et al., 2015, p. 286).
as well as other literary texts with references to this city (namely, poetry and prose by authors such as Luís de Camões’ epic poem Os Lusíadas (The Lusiads), 1572, Teixeira de Pascoaes’ poem “Painel” (“Panel”), 1935, José Régio’s Balada de Coimbra (Coimbra Ballad), 1941, Miguel Torga’s poems dedicated to Coimbra scattered throughout the sixteen volumes of his Diário (Diary), 1941-1995, Branquinho da Fonseca’s novel Porta de Minerva (Minerva’s Door), 1947 and Manuel Alegre’s collection of poems Coimbra nunca vista (Coimbra as Never Seen), 1995, just to name a few authors and works). Moreover, we have also used questionnaires, interviews and participant observation.

In the case of the authors, the grid includes the name, dates of birth and death, the nature of their connection to Coimbra and the places associated with them. In the case of texts, the authors are identified, as well as the work(s) and the page(s) where the excerpts and the places referred to have been found (this database will be the main source in the creation of the digital literary map).

Our exploratory study revealed that most activities are almost entirely of the responsibility of the official entities, namely, local councils, and our analysis shows that only in Lisbon, where there is a significant number of literary itineraries (25) compared to the rest of the country do private organisations play a greater role (only one activity is supervised by Lisbon’s city council); elsewhere, tours that have begun recently in the city of Porto are also privately run. We believe this is due to the popularity of the authors associated with these cities; for example, authors connected with Lisbon are Fernando Pessoa, Eça de Queirós, José Saramago and Luís de Camões. On a national level, Coimbra is the second city in Portugal to offer more literary tourism products besides a few related activities (13), p. 12 itineraries and one annual (literary) dinner-conference, “Writing Flavours”, (not always based on texts and authors associated with Coimbra). Porto comes third, with three products, but this position may soon change because of the mapping and route-building work being developed by the cultural cooperative Bairro dos Livros.

In the second phase of the research, we identified places associated with the authors and their works because it is from the articulation between the location and the writer that a “literary landscape of Coimbra” emerges. As this is such a vast survey, we chose to do this work in phases, using the typology proposed by Charlie Mansfield (2015, pp. 44-45) to define these phases. Mansfield distinguishes three categories of literary tourism: Category A is based on the link between the text (characters and settings) and the physical space; Category B associates the authors with the physical spaces (for example, houses where they were born, places they visited, their graves); and Category C concerns mediation and promotion that is books as objects (literary festivals; filming locations that result from adapting a literary text; changing the designation of places, destinations or cities according to their association with literature). Therefore, in this second phase of the research, we started by collecting the resources resulting from the intersection between authors and physical space, and then of those resulting from the association between the texts and the physical space. The results obtained so far will be shown in the next section.

5. Literary landscapes of Coimbra

Coimbra is a destination for cultural tourism par excellence, both because of its material heritage, given the exceptional nature of its architectural heritage, and for its intangible legacy, notably for the role it played in the dissemination of the Portuguese language and culture. Its global significance is noticeable in the growing number of visitors in recent years.

The University of Coimbra and its former colleges scattered throughout the areas of Alta and Sofia are the main tourist attractions in Coimbra, as they were collectively classified as a World Heritage site in 2013. In 2018, the number of visitors amounted to 483,000. The city had registered 402,000 overnight stays in tourist accommodation in 2013; in 2017, the
registered overnight stays were 638,000. One of the most sought-after attractions by tourists is of literary interest, the Joanina Library, famous for its shape and ornamental richness, the valuable bibliographic estate of more than 53,000 books from the 16th to the 18th centuries, including some first editions. Dating from the baroque period, it receives nearly 1,800 visitors a day, the maximum number allowed (Menezes, 2017), meaning that many tourists who arrive in Coimbra with the intention of visiting the Joanina Library do not have access to it. Meanwhile, other places and spots of cultural and literary interest do not benefit from the positive tourism impacts and are undervalued by tourism stakeholders.

Complementary or even alternative programmes can diversify the town tourism supply and create differentiated programmes so that, as one example, if tourists are unable to enter the library upon arrival at the UC, visits to other cultural attractions can be suggested as viable alternatives. Indeed, the potential of Coimbra for the development of literary tourism is remarkable, with 189 authors and 751 literary places having been identified so far. It is, however, important to note that sometimes these literary places are coincident in physical space but distinguishable according to the literary marker, i.e. the same physical place can have different meanings depending on the literary text or author we connect it to: for instance, the river Mondego has different meanings in the poetry of Luís de Camões (memory of his youth), António de Sousa (memory of the girls he loved in Coimbra) and António Nobre (working place of the country girls). Of the 751 literary places identified, 260 were identified in terms of the nature of the relationship between author and physical space, so they are referred as authors’ places. Figure 1 shows their distribution according to the categories.

Regarding the authors, the UC is the predominant link between literature and physical space: out of 260 examples, 99 have links with the university. Though this could indicate that most routes would have to pass through the UC at some point (thereby increasing tourist pressure), it should, however, be noted that the creation of itineraries based on these authors would not necessarily or exclusively focus on the UNESCO-classified area of the city at all, as they would include a whole set of other locations related to the authors’ lives in the city including, but not limited to: houses where they were born or lived; houses where they attended literary gatherings or where they died; the cafes they frequented or the monuments dedicated to them.

Our survey was made from a total of 204 texts, some of which contain several references to places in Coimbra. However, for the purposes of counting literary places, each text is only

![Figure 1](image-url)
counted once. In addition to the knowledge of texts and authors we had from our own readings, for this collection we also used compilations, such as Cancioneiro de Coimbra (1918) by Afonso Vieira and EnCantada Coimbra (2013) by Adosinda Torgal and Madalena Ferreira, as well as the application of the LITSCAPE – Atlas Project of Literary Landscapes of Continental Portugal (https://iel.ii.fcsh.unl.pt/paisagensliterarias/). For this project, we have not imposed restrictions on era, genre, literary quality or significance, but so far we have considered only Portuguese writers. For the purpose of registering and classifying places, we separated the physical landscape (the places) from the human landscape (the people living in those places). Thus, of the 751 literary sites identified, 260 are linked to authors and 491 to texts; 280 refer to the physical landscape; and 211 to the human landscape.

The intersection of the authors’ biographies with the physical space of Coimbra highlights the overwhelming importance of the university. It is the pole that attracts writers to the city, where they graduate, and therefore it is within its physical space that we find the greatest concentration of possible connections between place and literature. Yet, when we identify the literary places that appear in the texts, we find a different landscape. In this case, most of the references (122) are made to the city itself and, within it, the most frequently mentioned location is the River Mondego, with 87 references. The university appears in third place, with 72 references. Regarding the human landscape, Inês de Castro is mentioned 37 times, Coimbra’s students 20 times and Dom Pedro and Rainha Santa Isabel (the Holy Queen) 16 times each. These results, albeit provisional, demonstrate that though regarded as being the primary attraction in Coimbra, the university is not the only site that should be made prominent in the city’s literary tourism experiences. In fact, there are many other points of interest in the city that deserve to be valued and offered as an alternative tourist resource, considering their literary value.

However, the literature provides other suggestions for places of tourism possibilities and, in particular, for activities along the two banks of the river, entailing both the river itself and the so-called “Mondego Fields” (in the study, the river and its banks are associated with the students, the local country girls, the highlanders and the washerwomen who worked there). The potential for tourism on the left bank of the Mondego, which is currently less visited and undervalued, is especially relevant. It is where the sites most associated with Inês de Castro, Dom Pedro and the Holy Queen are located. It should be noted that the forbidden love of Pedro and Inês is a recurring theme in Portuguese literature (we highlight the works of Garcia de Resende, Luís de Camões, António Ferreira, Bocage and Nuno Júdice in particular), as well as in Brazilian literary imagery, enhancing the attraction of tourists to places associated with the couple.

Isabel de Aragão, the Holy Queen, is also a figure that stands out in the History of Portugal, attracting thousands of pilgrims to her grave (on the left bank), and she is also the subject of a vast number of texts, from the legend of the queen who turns bread into roses to the poems by João de Deus and Manuel Alegre and the prose of Vitorino Nemésio. The places of Pedro and Inês, and of the Holy Queen, in combination with other factors and experiences from different tourism niches, may both assist in drawing visitors away from the area of the UC and aid in relieving pressure on popular sites, thereby diversifying the experiences of tourists, and make them memorable and strengthen the relationship with the local community.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the relevance and potential of literary tourism in Coimbra. There are many literary sites connected to various authors and many sites associated with literary texts in Coimbra which demonstrate the potential for literary tourism throughout the city. Although most of the places associated with authors have a UNESCO classification, our research shows that they also provide other opportunities for alternative itineraries which could be developed into different and more enriching experiences for
hosts and visitors. The most interesting results are those related to the places mentioned in literary texts, as they are often located in relatively neglected areas of the city, and so could enable the creation of products and activities to divert tourists from the currently overcrowded attractions to other locations, attracting tourists to more peripheral and less visited areas of the city such as the left bank of the River Mondego. Possible activities to boost this area by the river include: literary paper chases and similar games available in physical and digital format; geocaching; the creation of a passport of literary sites which require participants to pass through parts of the river-bank and could involve participation in experiences rather than just visiting and then leaving.

The creation and development of tourist and cultural routes and itineraries, is one of the most appropriate ways to drive tourist flows through the territory and to lead visitors (national and foreign) to visit less internationally recognised places, also contributing to a balanced and sustainable development of tourism within the territories. At the same time, it is a big opportunity to enhance the community’s awareness about their culture and important personalities associated with the city. The number of texts, authors, objects and even events that can be associated to new narratives resulting from the exploratory and empirical work already developed (751 literary sites) showed that there is an enormous potential for new offers and creative combinations that can lead to the affirmation of Coimbra as a literary destination.

An important step in the development of this niche in Coimbra is the development of a digital tool that registers the literary memory of Coimbra associated with the physical space. Moreover, it will provide the possibility of creating a digital and interactive map that displays the literary landscape of the city and that allows the general public and stakeholders in the areas of tourism, culture and education to design routes and to develop literary tourism experiences.

Developing a digital tool that registers the literary memory of Coimbra associated with the physical space, creating from it a digital and interactive map that displays the literary landscape of the city and that allows the general public and stakeholders in the areas of tourism, culture and education to design routes and to develop literary tourism experiences, will surely be an important step in the development of this niche in Coimbra. Investing in the development of literary tourism in Coimbra means above all investing in the preservation of the literary legacy and the architectural heritage that has literary connections. Less known sites would also benefit from it, by alleviating the tourist flow to more well-known places of interest. Finally, it would contribute to the affirmation of the collective memory, as literary tourism involves the recognition of both natural and cultural heritage, a combination which is sometimes unappreciated and marginalised.

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Further reading


Literary Tours, available at: www.visitportugal.com/en/content/literary-tours

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Exploring the embodied narrations of the city

Suvi Satama and Juulia Räikkönen

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to explore how people bodily narrate and use collective memory to clarify their embodied experiences regarding a city which they memorise.

Design/methodology/approach – Drawing on 1,359 short stories collected by the online travel portal Visit Turku about ‘How the city feels’, the fine-grained embodied experiences of people are represented through descriptions of their feelings towards the city of Turku.

Findings – Based on the analysis, two aspects through which the respondents narrated their embodied experiences of cities have been identified: (1) the sociomaterial entanglements with the city and (2) the humane relationship with the city.

Research limitations/implications – This study is limited to short stories acquired online, raising questions of anonymity and representativeness. Thus, these narrations are constructions which have to be interpreted as told by specific people in a certain time and place.

Practical implications – Tourist agencies should pay attention to the value of looking at written stories as bodily materialisations of people’s experiences of city destinations. Understanding this would strengthen the cities’ competitiveness.

Originality/value – By empirically highlighting how people memorise a city through narrations, the study offers novel viewpoints on the embodied experiences in cities as well as the cultural constructs these narrations are based on, thus broadening our understanding of how cities become bodily entangled with us.

Keywords Embodied experience, City, Embodied narration, Narrative template, Cultural construct, Collective memory

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

[..] Turku is the quieter brother, at whom the bigger brother laughs, even while knowing that the quiet one is actually older and wiser; he does not waste his time on partying or innovating with a loud voice but instead reads and philosophises (Quote 483).

This study focuses on the embodied narrations of the city. By embodied narrations, we refer to the representations of the past, namely, collective memories (Stepnisky, 2012; Wertsch, 2008), which come alive through the nostalgic experiences that people relive and describe in their stories in sensory-based, intimate and vulnerable ways.

In tourism research, there has been a tendency to prioritise the auditory (Kaaristo, 2014) or gustatory (Hall and Sharples, 2004) sense. In turn, this has created a tendency towards an analytical isolation of the senses in which an individual sense has been placed at the centre of the study, which then results in somewhat isolated accounts of sight, smell, touch, sound or taste (Crouch and Desforges, 2003). “I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience”, Pallasmaa (2005, p. 40) writes. In line with this thought, this study emphasises that all the senses should be viewed as a complex entirety, whole, forming the basis for experiencing urban space “through the whole sensory body” (Degen, 2008, p. 9). For example, an auditory experience, such as silence, has simultaneous visual,
aural, social, haptic and temporal aspects (Kaaristo and Järvi, 2012) and cities, then, form experiential milieus in which our bodily sensations become mediators of urban experience (Degen, 2008) examined in this article.

The quotation presented in which one of the respondents describes the city as another human being, a quiet brother, serves as the starting point for this paper, which draws on the theoretical framework of collective memory (Durkheim, 1961; Halbwachs, 2002; Wertsch, 2008), according to which people share the same narrative tools to narrate their experiences in embodied ways (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Seremetakis, 1994). Here, we understand the body as an ambiguous and hence contested concept, “produced and consumed in particular places and localities” (Holliday and Hassard, 2001, p. 12), and embodied narrations as constitutions of the sensory-practico body (Degen, 2008) and performative by nature (Butler, 1990). These narrations are thus embodied in the sense they entail highly intimate, emotional and sensuous descriptions of the attachments between the respondents and the city they memorise. Specifically, “embodied experience” is the central theoretical concept in our framework of collective memory, and it is developed within the wider theoretical discussion on the sensory holistic urban experience (Breiby and Stätten, 2018; Campeo et al., 2014; Hubbard and Lyon, 2018; Jones, 2013; Park and Almeida Santos, 2017; Rahmani et al., 2019; Tussyadiah et al., 2018).

The study illustrates how people use their collective memory (Glăveanu, 2017; Wertsch, 2008; Sturken, 2008) to make representations of their embodied experiences of the cities they encounter (Adams et al., 2007; Crouch and Desforges, 2003) and hence illustrates that embodied experiences are an inseparable part of representing the cities people live in or visit and a valuable aspect in making sense of them.

Narrating embodied experiences of cities

There are rich geographical studies (Seamon, 1979; Tuan, 1977) on how individuals experience places, spaces and landscapes and how these experiences constitute the basis of an individual’s involvement in the world (Li, 2000). For example, the discussions of sense of place and space (Crouch and Desforges, 2003) and embodiment (Crouch, 2000) focus on physically, socially and culturally embedded interrelationships between the body, the mind and the environment (Agapito et al., 2013). Tuan (1977) defined a place as a human creation invested with meaning, and since then, scholars (Cresswell, 2004; Young, 1999) have highlighted that meaningful places are not prefigured ontologically given objective entities but are social constructions (Chronis, 2015).

In the field of cultural and urban studies, there is a growing stream exploring the embodied side of the cities (Brown and Shortell, 2016; Degen and Rose, 2012; Hubbard and Lyon, 2018; Low, 2015; Paterson and Glass, 2020), which seek to provide detailed accounts of the ways walking and other forms of our embodied presence produce city spaces as meaningful (Brown and Shortell, 2016). These studies involve the aspects of senses (Degen and Rose, 2012; Low, 2015; Taylor, 2003; Urry, 2001), rhythm and memory (Goh, 2014), temporal experience and the slow pace of rurality (Kaaristo and Järvi, 2012) and the body in narratives of tourism (Rickly-Boyd, 2009). The idea of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) dominated the discourse of embodied tourist experience for decades, even though Ryan (1997), for example, challenged the dominance of the visual sense by arguing that the tourist experience is a multi-functional leisure activity that engages all the senses. Tourism destinations – whether urban or rural – provide multisensory encounters in which tourists are bodily engaged in the process of sense-making (Crouch and Desforges, 2003).

“An experience is a subjective-objective phenomenon”, according to Rahmani et al. (2019: 193). Throughout this paper, embodiment is considered the sensation of inhabiting a body that moves and feels (Noland, 2009). The term “embodiment” is related to the strand of non-
representational theories and focuses on practices, actions and performances that are enacted between humans and nonhuman materialities (Thrift, 2007). The body is viewed not only as a physical, socio-cultural object but also as the performative site (Butler, 1990) and “platform” of human experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1989). Therefore, in terms of embodiment, people perceive and feel their surroundings in sensory-based ways, but also do different things in relation to the world around them. The body is thus “both material and social” (Huopalainen, 2015, p. 829), consisting of embodied experiences to which materialities around it are linked.

On the embodiment of collective memory

In this study, the short essays analysed were viewed as cultural constructs and narrative templates (Wertsch, 2008; Sturken, 2008), and the theoretical framework of collective memory was used to designate “our relation to the collective past” (Glaveanu, 2017, p. 256), including events or circumstances in the city that shape entire communities. By cultural constructs, we refer to the narratives to which experiences are inherently entwined with, and by narrative templates to the platforms in which the various descriptions we come to know and understand the social world around us (Somers, 1994: 6060) become told and made sense of. People engage in the process of remembering socially in relation to others, and memories are formed and re-formed in social contexts (De Rosa and Dryjanska, 2017; Halbwachs, 1992). Collective memory, therefore, reflects a certain group’s social framework, and it links the past with the present (Wertsch, 2008). What is remembered extends beyond what has been personally experienced (Zerubavel, 1996) and cities as spatial-sensuous encounters (Degen, 2008) are a valuable site for this process of remembering.

Collective memory is constructed not only in an individual’s mind but also in the sociomaterial field outside the individual (Seremetakis, 1994), thus making it an embodied phenomenon. According to this view, the embodiment of a collective past has been theorised as a “somatic experience” that refers to the way in which the body informs the logic of thinking about history (Joy and Sherry, 2003). This is the perspective applied for this study. Thus, we argue that collective memory can be used as an analytical tool to better understand the complex ways people construct narrations about and representations of embodied experiences in the cities, and in which different aspects, such as temporal, visual, aural, social and haptic, are included simultaneously and overlappingly (Kaaristo and Järvinen, 2012). In this study, we aim at illustrating how collective memories come alive through the experiences that people narrate in their stories. It is, thus, through these narrations we constitute our social identities, as well (Somers, 1994).

Methodology

Context and research material of the study: case of Turku

The empirical aspect of this study was conducted in Turku, the former capital of Finland, located in Southwest Finland. Currently, Turku is the sixth largest city in Finland with a population of 190,000 (Visit Turku, 2019). Turku is a city that raises various emotions in the minds of Finnish people. On the one hand, Turku is a despised city because of its ugly dialect and an image of its “yokel” people. On the other hand, for example, the atmosphere of the riverfront of Aura is almost lyrical and renders visible the feel of Central Europe. Therefore, walking along the river makes many people feel being on a vacation abroad, thus making walking in this small-sized, cosy city a very lovable experience.

The research material consists of 1,359 short stories, varying from 20 to 80 words in length, that describe what Turku feels like. The stories were collected in autumn 2018 through an online portal (www.kissmyturku.fi) of Visit Turku, a local destination marketing organisation that is responsible for marketing Turku and the surrounding areas to tourists. The collection
of the stories is part of a wider “Kiss my Turku” marketing campaign, and the organisers of the competition aimed to use it later in marketing the city. The respondents were informed their short stories would be used as a part of the city’s marketing campaign later and that some of them would be published online (see https://kissmyturku.com/turku-tuntuu). However, the idea of using the short stories as a research material came later, and the respondents did not know about this when writing their stories. The second author of this paper has collaborated with the Turku board of tourism for years and got to know from the board that there would be a writing competition of “how the city feels”. With a background in experience tourism, she got interested in this competition and approached the travel manager of Visit Turku to ask for a permission to use the stories as a research material in the future.

The publicly communicated aim was to write what Turku feels like. What is distinctive in the city of Turku is that it raises emotions – positive and negative ones – in most Finnish people, and there are many jokes about Turku as well. Three more specific questions were also posed to the people in the online questionnaire: What kind of thoughts, feelings and emotions does Turku arouse in you and why? Do you remember a special encounter with Turku or the people of Turku? In your opinion, how do people talk about Turku in general? Participation was encouraged by the chance of obtaining a gift certificate to be given to one randomly chosen respondent.

Because of the anonymous collection of the research material, the respondent profiles cannot be described. The short stories vary in style and include stories written by females and males, young and old and tourists and locals. Although many stories were not written on a highly personal level and contain general information on the attractions of the city, there was a number of multifaceted, embodied, emotional, sensitive and humane stories and even poetic narratives, through which people reflected on their embodied relationships with the city.

**Analysis**

Places are constructed through the embodied experiences of people (Soica, 2016), which are negotiated and represented through collective memory and their cultural constructs (Steppinsky, 2012; Wertsch, 2008). These cultural constructs are then communicated via spoken or written language (De Rosa and Dryjanska, 2017; Young, 1999), such as the short stories examined for this study. The analysis began with a close reading of the 1,359 short stories. The two researchers separately read the material and selected the short stories that described the ways people narrated their embodied experiences of the city. As a result of this process, the first researcher selected 160 and the second researcher 124 short stories to be included in the second phase of the analysis.

Second, both researchers classified the selected short stories into certain categories, which emerged based on the research material. Next, the categories that had been separately identified from the research material were examined to reach a consensus on the selection and primary analysis; it was clear that similar types of thematic categories, such as humanising the city, had been identified by both researchers in the research material. The first author developed the analysis into the final two aspects of narrating the city bodily described in the findings section of this paper.

Of course, there are limitations in this study. The research material consists of short stories, which raise questions of private and public, personal and representational and authenticity and cultural construction. Thus, as narrations are always constructions, the level of representation becomes an important, methodological issue of this specific study. Moreover, the short stories acquired online are probably not as rich as in-depth face-to-face qualitative interviews would be. Because the respondents are writing from their own subject
positions, we as researchers must clarify our own subject positions, as well as avoid romanticising the short stories or exaggerating their meanings.

**Two aspects of narrating the city in embodied ways**

*Narrating the sociomaterial entanglements with the city*

An identity of a group is constructed with narrative templates, consisting of collective memories organised and told in specific ways (Stapleton and Wilson, 2017). In the first part of the analysis, the ways people described the city of Turku as a home – an intimate, a material and a meaningful place for the respondents and a collective site of embodied reflections from the past – were examined. Often, this was expressed by respondents living in or by previous residents of Turku who had special memories of the city, such as described as follows:

> Turku feels like home. In Turku, I was born and gave birth to two children. Turku is big enough but also small enough. It has a vivid city life, but if you want, you can easily get into clearer waters: to woods, fields and beaches (Quote 335).

As this quote illustrates, meaningful and embodied life events, such as the birth of children, are attached to the narrations of cities and affect the way people become engaged with the city in a sensory manner (Adams *et al.*, 2007). The contrasts between the rush and slowness, relating to what Kaaristo and Järvi (2012) call as distinctive “timescapes” of the city were also felt as something meaningful, as the quote above renders visible. In some of the short stories, the material entanglements with the city were related to bodily sensations, functions and humane rhythms. The following quotes describe the convenience and welcoming spirit of the city, which relate to its embodied entanglement:

> Turku is like a warm embrace, which you love to return to after a journey. Turku means home (Quote 407).

> I like Turku and its humane rhythm; its beat does not choke the wanderer. Turku is the size of its inhabitants. It offers all the services you need and more. It improves and develops. Within all of its history, it is modern and creative. There is no lack of culture or entertainment, and it is ‘not worth going further than the sea to fish’ since even visitors from far away are drawn here (Quote 261).

The quotes contain cultural constructions the respondents believe are expected from them, such as viewing the city as contemporarily creative and full of cultural activities to offer on the one hand and a historical background on the other hand. As the quote above captures, wherever you are in the city, you are involved in an intense sensuous encounter (Degen, 2008). In other words, we approach the short stories not as sites of individual memories, but more as dynamic, contagious and unstable sites of cultural memory (Sturken, 2008) in which personal memories of the city become mediated from the experience of the cultural “image” of Turku among Finnish people.

Sometimes, the city is felt on a more abstract level as a mind-set, a way of living, as the following quote exemplifies:

> Turku is a mindset. When arriving by car, I breathe a sigh of happiness when I see the sign ‘Turku Åbo’, and it puts my mind at rest as I immediately feel like I am home. After having lived elsewhere for 23 years, I eagerly await the day when I can return to the home of my heart. As working in western Siberia is sometimes very hard, I have turned a deaf ear to those malicious remarks about Turku or its people; I cannot help but think that it is just envious slander. Not everyone is lucky enough to be able to come from Turku (Quote 143).

Also here, the quote of the short story captures the embodied narrations, such as “putting the mind at rest” and “returning to the home of my heart”, of the city. The material artefact –
the sign of Turku – can be viewed as a site of collective, embodied memory (Chronis, 2006), as it awakes warm feelings and special memories in the respondent. Hence, despite the abstractness of describing the city as a mind-set, the words reflect the embodied narrations of the respondent wants to express when returning to Turku after years. It is notable that in many short stories, the city is described in a positive light. In this quote, the positivity might arise from the phenomenon of memories growing sweeter with time. Overall, regarding the city as an intimate place or a home illustrates the embodied nature of cities in terms of an idea of “cosiness”, which is a profoundly embodied term. Home is a sensory-based place in which many embodied experiences take place. People’s earthy, humane, sensuous everyday life, in all its richness, happens at home.

The short stories also illustrate how a city becomes entangled bodily with those who have experienced strong emotional reactions or meaningful encounters there. Some of the short stories include powerful sensory-based descriptions of the ways that the city has become an inseparable part of the respondents’ embodied selves. The following quotes capture the “fleshiness” of the relationship between the city and its visitors or inhabitants and the multi-sensory encounters (Agapito et al., 2013, p. 70) cities provide:

Turku feels like it is in my guts [1], for good or bad. You let it in once, and it will never leave (Quote 433).

You feel Turku with your whole being and every cell. You cannot experience its atmosphere anywhere else in Finland. Turku leaves a trace in your heart (Quote 159).

Turku feels like me (Quote 290).

The feeling “in the guts” and the feeling in “every cell” in these quotes are further examples of expressions that are circulating in the surrounding cultural field. There is also a comforting, soft aspect of the city visible in the respondents’ embodied narrations, as the following quotes show:

Turku feels like a dream – like a lapse of memory followed by remembrance. Understanding. Warmth. Loneliness. Gloom. It tears you down, but after the storm, the fallen tree branches are swiftly cleared away. It offers light and love, revealing that there is good and bad in everything. Turku is enough, even if it is not enough. To Turku, I am enough, even if I could never be good enough for myself. Turku feels pleasant, distant and terrifying, just like the future or home. Unsustainably heavy. Unbearably light (Quote 344).

Nowadays, I live in Helsinki and seldom visit Turku, but I often think of it. In my thoughts, Turku feels soft. It feels like my previous home. The one that offered me shelter, safety and cosiness. Whose doorbell sound I still remember. The one who makes you feel both warm and wistful when thinking about her. Turku feels like a warm summer sea breeze, smells like salt that leaves traces on your skin and inner mind (Quote 323).

These two quotes capture the “touch” of the city, its shaping nature towards a materialisation of nostalgia as the time passes by and the ways in which the city can be attached to our bodies in very intimate ways; it is through their embodied experiences that the respondents remember it, and through these short stories, they narrate it. Some of the expressions are commonly used and work as a function of shared narrative structures (Wertsch, 2008; 153), such as the “feel of a warm summer sea breeze” and “the smell of salt that leaves traces on the skin”. So, in this sense, what is “collective” in the quotes above is the past, filled with embodied sensations of the city, rather than the respondents doing the “remembering” (Giăveanu, 2017, p. 256). The cultural constructs the short stories entail also transmit the humane attachment to the city, to which the analysis now turns.
Narrating the humane relationship with the city

In the second part of the analysis, the various ways in which the respondents narrated the city as another person, a human, was examined. The following quote finely captures how vividly the body as a point of “affordance between ourselves and our surroundings” (Crouch and Desforges, 2003:7) can be captured:

Old, wise, beautiful, by the river shore, sunny, with the archipelago, appealing, filling, thirsty, green, light, patriotic, full of history, cosy, sympathetic, introverted, funny, happy, humorous, Christmassy, summery, appealing, always ready, beautiful, dog-friendly, destroyer of her great city centre, maritime, charming, awake, so slow in decision-making, slipping in her budgets, known for her students, friendly, caring, my city. Now and forever! (Quote 382)

Taking one step further, some stories include multifaceted, humane characteristics or traits that are associated with the city or describe how Turku would behave in different situations:

There is magic in the spring evenings of Turku. I said to my friend some years ago that when I am lost and sad, I feel that Turku takes me in her arms and gently swings me. She articulates: you belong here; you will be fine here (Quote 746).

These narrations embody Turku as a fascinating personality that consoles, encourages and empathises with the people around, if needed, as the quote describes. As the city becomes “in sync with the body’s needs” (Hubbard and Lyon, 2018, p. 943) in the above quote, it turns into a magical site of collective memory, as well. Another respondent discussed a slightly different relationship with the city of Turku:

Turku is straightforward and beautiful, European and different. It fascinates and provokes but still attracts me. She allows herself to be just like you, private and personal. She lives through four seasons. In winter, she walks on the ice of the River Aura, celebrates spring on the Vartiouvari hill, in summer awaits the festivalgoers who feel the sea breeze in their hair and carries a Bishop’s doughnut in her hands while returning home in the shadows of the autumn foliage. It bears wars and terror attacks. Despite them, the river Aura flows towards the Archipelago Sea, the sound of a guitar can be heard from the Puolala park and dancing continues at Uittamo pavilion. Life goes on, and that, if anything, is what it feels like to live in Turku (Quote 1,174).

In this quote, the personality of the city is described as provocative and daring, but even so, the respondent writes, the city lets its people be who they are. Here, Bishop’s doughnut and the sound of a guitar can be interpreted as the materialisations of embodied memories attached to the city. As Chronis (2006, p. 293) states, “either in actuality or in imagination, a contact with objects of the past is a multi-sensory, synesthetic experience”. Hence, the city does not push the people to be who they are not, and this is an essential characteristic of the relationship between the city and the people. Another respondent continues in a similar vein:

Turku is sunny, beautiful, unique and modern. Slightly introverted, but she takes goodcare of her people and guests. She is the administrator of the Finnish Principality of Dining and the pearl of the archipelago! (Quote 325)

In some short stories that depict the city as another human being, the rather small and compact, Turku is compared to famous city destinations, such as Venice, Rome, Paris and New York. The following quotes illustrate the deep emotional and sensuous traces that cities may leave in respondents’ minds:

Turku is the Venice of Finland: a little magical, sophisticated (at least in her own opinion), an artistic soul who, despite her refinement, reawakens the scent of life from her canals and rivers (Quote 1,357).

Turku is the Paris of Finland. For real. It is warm-hearted, dark and slightly bohemian, with arms full of velvet, whose artistic fringes tickle your cheek while embracing when you meet. I ❤ Turku (Quote 238).
The hills surround the city as in Rome, opening up beautiful vistas around the city (Quote 143).

Turku feels and breaks into you. It rolls around in the slush, reaches for the starry sky and rushes forward. Reunion with Turku is like looking into a mirror again: something new, something old, something borrowed [...] The streets smell like mud, rain, beer, car exhaust, burger, sometimes even cigarettes: the most New Yorker smell of Finland! The lights by the river sharpen the mind of the nightly wanderer. The most European scenery of Finland! The most historical scenery of Finland! The most astonishing shimmer! The deep hole at the marketplace construction site feels like amnesia (Quote 344).

In these quotes, people seem not to treat Turku as a touristic destination. Rather, it is compared with legendary touristic destinations (Venice, Paris, Rome) but is not necessarily sensed like one. Hence, by determining what people sense in the city that is familiar to them, it is possible to reflect on what it is they want to feel about other cities, as the four quotes above illustrate.

Depending on the respondents’ sensory experiences and previous encounters, Turku is also sometimes depicted as a specific person, someone who is distant and unknown, a casual acquaintance, a dear friend or even a close relative. The following two quotes narrate a city as a distant or unfamiliar person:

Personally, it is regrettably distant. Confident but introverted. Beautiful and interesting but so traditional, without any surprises (Quote 289).

Turku, so far, you feel unknown to me. You have been a casual acquaintance I have met while just passing by. I am sorry, Turku, for not visiting you more often. I still believe that our relationship will improve as you have, for sure, stolen many of my friends already. From them, I have heard so much good about you. One day we will meet again, and I will give you enough time. Waiting for you, Turku (Quote 898).

However, in many short stories, Turku is represented as a dear friend or a close relative, a sister, a brother or even the “stylish aunt” who is not as close as the other relatives but far more sophisticated:

Turku is like a little sister who gives herself airs and graces, assumes she is a bit more sophisticated and pretty, but in reality, she is just okay (Quote 117).

Turku is not one of those cities that warmly welcomes you with open arms and offers you a home [...] Turku is like a distant and sophisticated aunt, who offers you a room to stay while you study: you will take particular care not to call her mother – unless you are one of her children—and that is her will as well (Quote 214).

Overall, the quotes illustrate the dynamic ways embodied experiences of the respondents could be narrated in relation to the city by considering it as a “she”, a dear and precious relationship that may last for the lifetime and the ways these narrations worked as a site of collective memory.

Discussion and conclusion

Drawing on short stories of “How the city [of Turku] feels” collected by the online travel portal of Visit Turku, this study has illustrated the fine-grained ways collective memories come alive through experiences that people narrate in the stories. The existing debates on embodied experiences of cities (Degen and Rose, 2012; Goh, 2014; Low, 2015; Paterson and Glass, 2020) have already acknowledged the value of the body and senses in the path of constructing experiences. Multisensory experiences of places and urban environments (Crouch and Desforges, 2003; Degen, 2008) and their complexity (Kaaristo, 2014) are an important field of study, and the aim of this study was to make a valuable contribution to this field.
The study results emphasise that all the senses should be viewed as a complex entity, forming the basis for an embodied experience at the heart of being a human. People engage in the process of remembering socially in relation to others, and memories are formed and re-formed in social contexts, as Halbwachs (1992) argues. Collective memory, therefore, reflects people’s social framework, and it links the past with the present (Stepnisky, 2012; Wertsch, 2008) in bodily nostalgic ways, as we, in this article, have described through the short stories describing what the city of Turku feels like. By putting the theoretical notion of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992; Misztal, 2010; Olick, 1999; Stepnisky, 2012), and its embodied nature (Narvaez, 2006) into the focus, this study aimed at describing what the narrative templates that were chosen to capture the embodied relationship with the city were like. In the analysis, the reasons that these particular narrations have been used and some have been left out was considered a crucial part of shaping collective memories of the embodied experiences of the cities.

Based on the analysis, two aspects were identified through which respondents narrate their embodied experiences of cities:

1. narrating the sociomaterial entanglements with the city; and
2. narrating the humane relationship with the city.

Specifically, it has been illustrated that the sensing of and turning into specific, shared experiences with the city occur first and foremost through the embodied narrations of the individual, who reflects on his or her encounters with the city. Several recent studies have acknowledged the role of the body in urban experience (Agapito et al., 2013; Chronis, 2015). The findings provide nuance to these studies by empirically demonstrating how the body is subtly implicated in the experience and how the phenomenon is attached to more broad cultural circulations of embodied experiences and their expressions of urban environments, and how the collective memories are always generated by the relations with other people and materialities around us (Stepnisky, 2012).

Travelling agencies all over the world are increasingly advocating embodied experiences, such as biking, nature, bungee jumps, Segway tours and air balloons. However, this study encourages researchers of urban spaces, tourist agencies and other travel organisations to understand the embodied experiences attached to cities and their landscapes in a more complex and reflexive ways. It is crucial to pay attention to the subtle details of embodied experiences with and in a city to understand the ways places are continuously memorised, negotiated and represented collectively and bodily in the discursive fields that surround us. The memorisations of people and the embodied narrations constructed based on them play a significant role in conveying hidden experiences between cities and the people they embrace.

Note

1. Italics have been added for emphasis in the original quotes.

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The Geographical imagination of Israeli tourists to Turkey

Irit Shmuel and Nir Cohen

Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine changes in the discourse concerning Israeli tourism to Turkey between 2000 and 2014.

Design/methodology/approach – Drawing on the concept of geographic imagination and using a critical cultural discourse analysis of travel stories published in the Israeli media, the authors analyze the extent to which changes have both reflected and resulted from changing relations between the two countries.

Findings – The analysis reveals that before 2010, Turkey was depicted in largely positive geo-cultural terms, imagined as a desired cosmopolitan, culturally “authentic” destination, which elicits feelings of joy and peacefulness. More recent narratives, however, highlighted its negative geopolitical qualities, underscoring its anti-Israel stance and invoking a fearful discourse of political and ethno-religious radicalization.

Originality/value – The study makes three contributions. First, by attending to the significance of perceptions in the social construction of tourist destinations it brings the fields of tourism and cognitive geography into a closer dialogue. Second, by using a critical discourse analysis it highlights the changing cultural contexts within which places are imagined and constructed by tourists. Finally, by uncovering the geographic complexities that undergird the discursive construction of places as tourist destinations, it illustrates how everyday narratives change over time, reflecting the dynamic nature of inter-state relations.

Keywords Geographic imagination, Turkey, Israel, Tourism, Discourse analysis

Introduction

In 2006, the Knesset (Israeli parliament) honored Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer with a special assembly. When Knesset Chairwoman Dalia Itzik declared “Israelis are big fans of Turkey, and 400,000 of them visited it past year” (Alon and Barkat, 2006), she was not far from the truth. In the same year, a record number of 362,000 Israelis visited Turkey (Figure 1). This high number reflected the spirit of the period, which saw a warm relationship between the two countries, including reciprocal presidential visits and military collaborations (Inbar, 2005). Two years later (2008), the number of Israeli tourists reached a record of 558,000. In those years, it seemed that nothing could undermine Israeli tourists’ choice of Turkey as a preferred destination. As a senior tourist guide wrote: “[Turkey is] a fascinating mosaic of ethnic groups […] the proximity to Europe, the diverse landscape, the historic traces, the renown cuisine[…] and the low prices draw many [Israeli] tourists” (Haskin, 2008).

Three years later, in 2011, only 79,000 Israeli tourists visited Turkey. The sharp decline was attributed primarily to several anti-Israel statements made by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the Turkish Prime Minister, as well as the Marmara (or Flotilla) incident (PI4) [1]. These events caused a swift change in Israeli public opinion, transforming attitudes toward Turkey from sympathy to disappointment and fear. Turkey’s image as a
neutral country, with Mediterranean geo-cultural qualities such as human warmth and authentic landscapes, metamorphosed quickly, and it was now imagined as a hostile Middle Eastern country whose support of Israel’s enemies makes it an undesired destination for Israeli (Jewish) tourists. Shortly, Turkey has changed from a sought-after geo-cultural destination into an intimidating country siding with Israel’s worst geopolitical adversaries.

The study examines this discursive change by drawing on travel articles and news stories published in the Israeli media between 2000 and 2014. It uses discourse analysis and uses primary sources such as official tourism data from both countries, as well as interviews with experts in the fields of tourism and diplomacy.

The article consists of four sections. We first present a theoretical framework that draws from the key concept of geographic imagination, and specifically touristic imagination. We then review the history of diplomatic and touristic relationship between the two countries. In the third section, we present our findings concerning the shift that took place during the said period. We conclude by discussing the advantages of using the concept of geographic imagination in the study of tourism – in Israel and beyond.

Theoretical background

The way people conceive of – and interpret – places has been conceptualized as geographic imagination (Gregory, 1994). A geographic imagination is the subjective way by which people think about, relate to, and evaluate places, based on their prior experiences and knowledge. Associated with critical cultural studies of “others”, the term is often used to justify certain actions and it bridges between reality, aspirations, expectations and fantasies (Gilley, 2010).

The term encompasses a range of meanings, including mental and social representations that generate discourse on culture, space and diversity (Gilley, 2010). These
representations and imaginations influence the way by which geographic knowledge and understandings are formed and distributed, creating schemes that lead people to understand the world better (Cosgrove, 2008). The sources shaping a person's geographic imagination develop along the life course, from schooling through exposure to media and social networks (Su, 2010).

Tourism, as a field of research, lends itself to an examination of the concept geographic imagination. Boorstin (1961) was the first to connect the concept to tourism, writing “Throughout history, by going too far places and seeing strange sights, men have prodded their imagination[...](p. 78). Touristic imagination is a creative process in which landscapes, attractions, destinations or countries are represented and described by people in different ways, whether they visited them or not (Salazar and Graburn, 2014). Sources of information that generate touristic imagination typically include movies, travel books, advertisements, tourist souvenirs and opinions expressed by one's family members and friends (Salazar and Graburn, 2014; Suvantola, 2017). Different sources might present the information manipulatively (Sambrook and Zurick, 2010). Daye (2005), for example, argues that a non-touristic source is conceived as more reliable. Yet, credibility is enhanced when the destination also appears in ads and campaigns (cf. Avraham, 2013). When the tourist has completed collecting information about a destination, he shapes it into stereotypical thinking (Suvantola, 2017).

The media has a significant role in advancing touristic imagination. It sets the emotions and cognition of its users, potentially promoting an actual touristic activity (Crouch et al., 2005). According to Huggan (2014), geographic imaginations may even change the conception of a geographic location. Geographic imaginations create interactions between tourists and local residents that are based on prior expectations of both. Theodossopoulos (2014) emphasizes the role of unconscious exposure of “Western” tourists to sources of information that color their preconceptions about visiting developing countries. Early exposure to unfiltered information, which is passed on to tourists from interested bodies, echoes within them and adds to the ideas and conceptions they already hold (Salazar and Graburn, 2014). Ahmad (2011) maintains that “Western” tourists hold pre-existing images of destinations that are “exotic” or “unknown.” When traveling, they attempt to justify and prove their own truths to themselves and to others. Their conceptions and prejudice consolidate into a touristic imagination that answers social needs, hopes and fantasies that contrast with those familiar to them (Bapista, 2014). The imaginary, fictional information combines with their practical experience, gradually shaping within their consciousness into narratives that comprise the “Western” touristic discourse (Suvantola, 2017). While these narratives are no more than simplified generalizations, they form a framework that gives meaning to the interactions of “Western” tourists with local populations (Ibid).

The touristic imaginations of European and North American tourists of non-Western places and populations have much in common (Salazar and Graburn, 2014). The images they evoke can be divided into two opposing poles, which exist simultaneously in the touristic imagination: contempt on the one hand, and idealization on the other (Theodossopoulos, 2014). Both poles, however, draw from the same orientalist approach of “exoticization of the other.” Touristic discourse may include, for example, descriptions of developing populations as “primitives[...], warlike cannibals” as opposed to positive descriptions of the population as “natural, pure and unspoiled” (Salazar and Graburn, 2014, p. 9).

Within this literature, several issues emerge. The first is a focus on the “otherness” of developing societies and their exoticization, creating a distorted impression of the local population (Suvantola, 2017). Focusing on the exotic and dissimilar leads to discourse that is judgmental, colonialist and binary (Jazeel, 2012). Second, there develops an expectation for authenticity (Cohen and Noy, 2005). “Western” tourists’ presupposition about communities in the developing world is that they must remain untainted by modernization and present a primal past or static authenticity that rejects any possibility of change.
Romanticizing and nostalgia are also present, as these communities are seen as closer to nature and representing the essence of ecological existence (Theodossopoulos, 2014).

Another issue concerns the weight of time and space. The geographic distance that separates between “Western” tourists and destinations in developing countries makes them feel such as traveling back in time (Salazar, and Graburn, 2014). Such feelings intersect with oriental perceptions, by which “Western” tourists conceive of locals as ethnically “different” and, hence, less powerful (Ahmad, 2011). Finally, touristic imagination of developing areas and populations includes contrasting opinions and conceptions (Theodossopoulos, 2014).

The concept of touristic imagination helps us understand how tourists evaluate and understand places before, during and after their visit. Tourists are exposed to information that derives from different sources, some of which are clearly biased. Consequently, their experience in a certain destination is shaped by similar thinking schemes that filter and classify the information. Thus, the touristic experience is unconsciously directed through sources that enhance certain expectations and diminish others. At the end of the visit the tourist echoes his experiences, contributing his own share to the collective conception of the place. These conceptions are not necessarily based on an objective reality; furthermore, they may alter when the discourse about the place changes. This may happen when political changes take place in the destination or when a new actor gets involved.

**Methodology**

The study is based on two methods of inquiry: cultural critical discourse analysis (CCDA) [3] and semi-structured interviews. The discourse analysis used a database of 415 articles about tourism in Turkey that appeared in the Israeli press from 2000 to 2014. The rationale for focusing on this time period is twofold: first, it saw considerable fluctuations in patterns of Israeli tourism to Turkey. The early part (2000-2009) witnessed a steep surge in the number of visitors, but it was followed by a sharp decline (2009-2012) and, finally, a slow and gradual increase (2013-2014). The upward trend has continued since, but given the possible impact of geopolitical events (e.g. 2015 European migrant crisis and the Atatürk 2016 Airport attack), we decided to exclude it from our research period. Second, concerning bilateral relations, our research period was tumultuous, with some years seeing warm diplomatic relations and others – (partial) disengagement. We believe the selected 15-year period is sufficiently eventful, providing a good basis for an empirically-rich inquiry.

The database was compiled from two main sources: first, printed and electronic Hebrew press, including daily newspapers (e.g. Yedioth Ahronoth and Maariv) and news portals (e.g. Ynet and Mako); and second, specialized magazines targeting specific audiences, such as nature-lovers, travelers (Masa Acher, National Geographic) and cyclists (Ofanaim). Articles were content analyzed and mapped, classified into (sub)-discourse and then matched with discursive strategies (Gavriely-Nuri, 2015). The texts were analyzed according to further criteria, including time, geographic space, keywords, type of article and its media source:

The second method included 10 personal, semi-structured interviews with Turkish and Israeli tourism, international relations and diplomacy experts (list is referenced). Interviews allowed us a more comprehensive understanding of bilateral relations. As such, this article, which focuses primarily on the discursive representations of Turkey in the Israeli media, uses interview data sporadically to emphasize specific, macro-level issues. Israeli interlocutors (4) were identified by the corresponding author through her personal and professional networks. Their interviews, which were conducted in 2014-2019, lasted approximately 1 h and, with one exception, held in their offices. Turkish interviewees (6) were identified through a Web search of Turkish universities. We used pertinent keywords (e.g. Israel-Turkey relations, Middle East, regional geopolitics). Once identified, they were
contacted by e-mail, provided with a research synopsis and asked to participate. They were interviewed in English by the corresponding author during her visit to Istanbul (September 2019). All interviewees were asked questions pertaining to Israel-Turkey relations during the designated research period. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim and then content-analyzed (Mayring, 2004).

Israel-Turkish relations: between diplomacy and tourism

Bilateral relations between Israel and Turkey have seen major shifts over the years. Ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries (1949), their relationship has fluctuated sharply (Bishku, 2006). An official Israeli legation in Turkey was opened in 1950 (Athanassopoulou, 2017), but following Israel’s Sinai Campaign (1956), its title was changed to chargé d’affaires. In 1980, in response to Israel’s enactment of the “Jerusalem Law,” Turkey lowered the diplomatic status to “secretary” (Tür, 2012). Yet, throughout the years, the commerce and trade between the two countries remained unharmed and even scaled up [4] (Bishku, 2006).

An important turn followed the Madrid Conference (1991), when the diplomatic representation rose to the level of ambassador (Walker, 2006). The Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians (1993) further contributed to the warming relations between the two countries (Walker, 2006). During the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000), pro-Palestinian demonstrations broke out throughout Turkey and anti-Israeli articles increasingly appeared in the Turkish press (Balci and Kardas, 2012). The Second Lebanon War (2006) unleashed a harsh Turkish response, scaling back the bilateral relations (Akgün et al., 2014).

In 2008, Israeli offensive in Gaza (Operation Cast Lead) caused anger in Turkey and further deteriorated relations [5] (Akgün et al., 2014). Two reflections of this were the infamous Davos incident (January 2009), in which Turkey’s Prime Minister Erdoğan blamed Israeli President Shimon Peres that “You [Israeli] know how to kill [Palestinians]” (Ibid), and the public humiliation of the Turkish Ambassador in Tel-Aviv [6]. Yet, the lowest point was reached in 2010. On May 31st, Israeli commando units took over one of six ships that were part of a flotilla sailing from Turkey with the goal of breaking the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. Nine Turkish civilians were killed during the takeover (Akgün et al., 2014). A year later, in September 2011, the UN released the Report of the Secretary General’s Panel of Inquiry on the May 31, 2010 Flotilla Incident (aka The Palmer Report). The report concluded that while the Israeli maritime blockade of Gaza was legal, enforcing it – in the case of the flotilla – involved excessive use of power. It recommended that Israel apologized and compensated families of Turkish victims. Israel consented, though the two years that passed before the Israeli apology were characterized by diplomatic hostility and economic sanctions on Turkey’s part (Kanat and Hannon, 2017). For example, the Turkish Government suspended military trade relations with Israel and expelled many of its diplomatic personnel from Ankara. Following intensive backstage efforts, a reconciliation agreement was signed (2016) that included exchange of ambassadors. Yet, Erdoğan remained highly critical of the Israeli Government, calling its policies toward Palestinians “racist and discriminatory” (Mitchel, 2019). In May 2018, after the IDF killed 52 Palestinians who protested along the Israel-Gaza border, Turkey returned its ambassador again from Tel Aviv and expelled the Israeli ambassador from Ankara (Gritten and Gunter, 2018).

Despite these unstable diplomatic relations, touristic exchanges over the years were mostly unaffected. Israelis visited Turkey as early as the 1950s, but it was only in the mid-1980s, when the IDF withdrew from Lebanon and the Turkish economy stabilized, that formal tourism ties began taking shape (Liel, 2017). In 1992, the two countries signed a tourism treaty (Bozdaglioglu, 2004), which elicited a steady incline in the number of Israeli visitors to Turkey. In the 1990s, an average of 300,000 Israelis visited Turkey yearly, and in 2007, the number of visitors exceeded 500,000. Turkey’s famous all-inclusive club hotels greatly appealed to Israeli tourists, drawing more than 550,000 of them in 2008 alone (PI2).
However, a dramatic and swift decline in the number of Israeli tourists followed the Cast Lead military operation (December 2008) and the flotilla incident (May 2010), bringing it down to 79,000 visitors (2010). In 2011 and 2012, those numbers were still below 100,000. In the past year for which we examined the touristic discourse (2014), Turkey was visited by 190,000 Israelis. In 2017, that number doubled to 380,000 (Figure 1). However, most tourists in recent years have been Arab citizens of Israel, whose religious identity possibly makes their visit to the Muslim country less conflicted (Lindenstrauss, 2019; PI8).

Findings: from a safe haven to a site of hostility

As noted earlier, the first period (2000-2009) is characterized by harmonious bilateral relations. President Sezer, for example, spoke of “The friendship and brotherhood” that have long characterized Turkish-Jewish relations and argued that they constitute “[A] solid foundation [for] the institutionalizing[…] collaboration between the Turkish Republic and the State of Israel” (Proceedings of Knesset Protocol, 2006, pp. 60-62). Undoubtedly, tourism was one of the main areas in which the two countries collaborated. A key manifestation of the latter was a national tourism campaign initiated in Israel by the Turkish Government. Sponsored by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the massive campaign, which began in 2000 and enjoyed an annual budget estimated at one million dollars (PI2), was intended to restore Turkey’s image following the lethal earthquake (1999). Its main objective, it was argued, was “to portray an image of a peaceful and serene country of Mediterranean tourism, with typical Western characteristics” (Zimet, 2017). The campaign played an important – though certainly not exclusive – role in the glorified representation of Turkey in the Israeli media (PI2), which discursively constructed the regional power as a pleasant, peaceful, and exotic destination.

To do so, media outlets used “idealization”, a discursive strategy which uses narratives that describe a phenomenon as perfect and utopian (Gavriely-Nuri, 2015). Idealization is based on two sub-strategies that create the overall ideal; the first is “painting a beautiful reality” by describing it in positive terms while ignoring problematic events. The second is “utopization” – using images that draw on fairy tales and movies, as well as on words such as “dreams” and “paradise.”

The first sub-strategy is reflected in many positive expressions that describe natural and human landscapes. For example, the following description of Turkey’s natural scenery: “wonderful expanses of nature filled with wild, green sceneries, abundant with flowing streams, picturesque towns, mountainous cliffs touching sea shores and beautiful sea gulfs” (Kfir, 2006). Its population, too, was described as “warm and friendly” (Fishman and Haramati, 2007). A major motif was the friendly Turkish demeanor. Their attitude toward Israeli tourists is repeatedly described as welcoming and amiable, creating an impression of a kind, simple people. The Turkish smile, evoking a non-threatening feel, was often highlighted. One article reported “[T]he people are nice and smiley in Turkey” (Yasmin, 2009), indicating an overall view on the Turkish population as friendly and harmless. Mentions of the Turkish smile often appeared in the context of their service-oriented attitude, as in the following quote referring to old, rural women who picked “the berries from the mulberry tree and served [them] with a smile” (Boaron, 2009).

The traditional character of Turkish towns and villages was also subjected to positive references. The relaxed descriptions of communities with traditional lifestyles shaped an image of a country still living in the past. Accounts of poverty were conveyed selectively, painting an inviting and safe picture of the country. For example, while Diyarbakir, is an unsettled place where “nationalistic sentiments still sizzle underground” visiting it is still depicted in positive terms

Despite the tense situation and certain fears, strolling the streets of the old city is a colorful and lively experience within a traditional, untouched lifestyle – whether it is the rich local cheese
market, the square in front of the big mosque that fills, as evening falls, with men who come to have a cup of sweet tea and talk about everyday worries, or the adorned women, hurrying to finish last minute errands before sunset (Kalev, 2007).

Turkey’s authenticity is emphasized in these descriptions. The Israeli outlook reflects longing for the “taste of true life, which has almost been forgotten in the bustle of the 21st century” (Boaron, 2009). The terms real and authentic appear repeatedly, projecting a sense of liveliness and excitement triggered by the interaction with its traditional qualities. Recurring references are made to bodily pleasures enjoyed by Israeli travelers. Chief among these is the hammam (Turkish bath), a place where bathing and socializing traditionally take place. A visit to the hammam is described as an authentic, delighting experience:

If you feel like doing the real thing, go to Nazir’s hammam. It has been there since 1611, and Nazir knows the job. The treatment includes divine soap scrubbing, staying in the hammam and a massage for 20 dollars a person (Manor, 2008).

Turkish food is also described as authentic and satisfying, eliciting gluttony, indulgence and even exclamations of delight. Descriptions of local food are accompanied by calls for future visitors not to miss tasting it, as part of the overall Turkish experience. The topic of food prevails both in texts about traveling in towns and villages and in reviews of Antalya’s all-inclusive hotels. The following is a representing account of Israeli enthusiasm over traditional Turkish food:

On the dough… she spread olive oil and put goat cheese (or meat), vegetables and spices. The dough was put into a hot oven and within seconds, a steaming pastry came out – guzalmaya.

We only relaxed after eating the third one (Zakai, 2005).

The Turkish body, though different than “Western” ideals – is similarly valorized. Turkish men are often described as being large, though not in a threatening way. As one traveler noted, “I did not think I could so enjoy scrubbing and washing by a large man named Mehmet, with only a small towel covering me” (Matsik, 2006). Other features, including smile, mustache, and even (missing) teeth were also subject to frequent descriptions. “Mustafa the guide, 73 years old, with a smile of few teeth and infinite knowledge[…]” (Schlesinger, 2008). While a toothless smile might elicit a range of emotions, from empathy to disgust, here it is described in endearing terms. References to the Turkish mustache often include adjectives such as “big,” “original” and “prickly,” alluding to the times of the Ottoman Empire, when it was an important status symbol (Wishnitzer, 2018).

A second strategy, “metaphorization”, makes frequent use of metaphors and images that present the Turkish space as utopian. It moves the reader back and forth between real and fantastic worlds, where heavenly landscapes, imaginary heroes and exalted sensations are brought together. Combining the real with the imaginary weaves threads of mystery into the narrative of the visit to Turkey, creating a “twilight zone” that blurs the boundary between these worlds. Repeated expressions include “like in fairy tales,” “like in the movies,” “paradise” and “dream.”

The “paradise” motif illustrates the extreme pleasure experienced by visitors upon interacting with local people and places. The following is an exemplary description:

This place [Lycia] has everything you could want from a paradise: shaded reclining areas, vine covered sheds, water streams, fish ponds, ditches near the bar. If we could only market this place as a tranquilizer from a pharmacy (Cohen, 2007).

Similarly, a description of women in Istanbul as “Old ladies with blue hair who look as if coming out of fairy tale books” (Ziffer, 2004), is another example of metaphorization. Finally, the words picture (or picturesque) in referring to towns and villages and dreamy
when describing sites and sceneries is also quite typical in this strategy (Zakai, 2005; Kfir, 2006).

In conclusion, the early (2000-2009) discourse constructs Turkey as an ideal destination for Israeli tourists. It offers them multiple positive experiences, delivered through moderating filters of exotics and authenticity and described by using metaphoric elements. These dimensions, however, dissipate gradually from 2008 and come to an abrupt end following the flotilla incident (2010). The later phase soon acquires geopolitical characteristics, which cast a negative stance toward the Turkish state and people.

The new phase (2009-2014) saw the use of a twofold discursive strategy, namely, radicalization and emotionalization. A problematic concept, often associated with “terrorism” (Neumann, 2003), radicalization in its simplest form is the process of becoming “[E]xtreme from something that is defined or is accepted as normative, traditional or valued as the status quo” (Mandel, 2009, p. 105). For our purposes, radicalization refers to putting at the forefront extreme and atypical events, qualities or activities taking place in Turkey that may impact Israeli tourists negatively. Radicalization plays out in three different arenas, namely, geopolitical, socio-cultural and ethno-religious.

Geopolitically, radicalization was used by stressing Turkey’s imbalanced involvement in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and support of the latter. Although Turkey has been a staunch supporter of Hamas since 2006 (PI10), a significant increase in the number of its official statements – and their decisiveness – has been evident since 2008, eliciting Israeli media to portray its transformation into yet another hostile Middle Eastern country. This was particularly the case during rounds of Israeli-Palestinian violence (e.g. 2008-2009 Operations Hot Winter and Cast Lead) or periods of strained bilateral relations. For example, Erdoğan’s anti-Israel remarks in which he highlighted the shared faith of the Turkish and Palestinian people and referred to the latter as “Our brothers” (Yahav, 2011a), must be understood against the backdrop of his support of the Palestinian Authority’s appeal to become a full UN member state. Similarly, his call upon the Israeli Government to stop its “aggressive” policies and “treat [Palestinians] better” (Walla, 2012), was made shortly after the Turkish Government announced it would press charges against four senior Israeli officers for their involvement in the flotilla incident.

The summer of 2014 was also a time in which the Israeli media frequently reported of other Turkish officials taking explicitly pro-Palestinian positions. For example, the Mayor of Ankara’s call to shut down the Israeli Embassy and his later twit “We do not want embassy of murderers in Turkey” (Ynet, 2014a), received fair attention in Israel. Similarly, frequent reports of President Gül’s warning of Turkey’s reaction if Israel “does not stop its aggression [against Palestinians]” (Mandel, 2014), as well as Emina Erdoğan, Turkey’s first lady, who was quoted saying “Palestine was, is and will forever remain” (Nahmias, 2010), need to be understood against the recurring rounds of violence between Israel and Hamas-ruled Gaza.

As Turkey’s top-down anti-Israel (geopolitical) discourse intensified (PI5; PI6; PI9), it legitimized and even encouraged social and cultural radicalization in everyday life (PI3; PI10). Especially after the flotilla incident, the Israeli media reported of “everyday” expressions of hatred toward Israel. Statements by Turkish citizens who argued, “it would be difficult to forgive Israel” because it “murdered many of our people” (Yahav, 2011b) and
“we are still angry about the Marmara, [and] what the Israelis are doing in Gaza” (Ziv, 2013) took center stage during this period, as did Turkish politicians who urged the Turkish public to take their anti-Israel sentiments to the streets during Operation Protective Edge (Ynet, 2014a).

Consequently, acts of violence against Israeli interests in Turkey occurred. Pro-Palestinian demonstrations, in which Israeli flags were set ablaze and protestors chanted anti-Israel slogans, became a daily spectacle across Turkish cities. The following is a typical description of one such demonstration, which took place at the height of Operation Protective Edge.

At 1:30 a.m. on Friday night, sounds of shattered glasses were heard in the Israeli consulate in Istanbul. ‘Murderous Israel, get out of Palestine’, the angry protesters called as they were throwing stones [...] at the building [...] ‘Hamas, hit Israel’, they shouted (Bar’el, 2014).

The radicalizing discourse – and practice – also affected Israeli sports teams who visited Turkey. In some occasions, Palestinian flags were waved during sports competitions between Israeli and Turkish teams, while in others, demonstrations were held outside the arena where tournaments took place (NRG, 2010). More extreme incidents included attempts to physically attack Israeli representatives. The following is an example of events that unfolded during Operation Cast Lead at a basketball game in Ankara between Turkish and Israeli teams as described by the manager of the latter:

It’s crazy here. There are 3500 crazy fans screaming Allahu Akbar [God is Great] and Death to the Jews. I have never seen anything like that [...] An atmosphere of terror, they threw shoes at us, water bottles [...] [When the game started] the entire audience stormed into the court [...] I ordered the players to flee to the dressing rooms, we ran like maniacs (Cohanim, 2009).

The reference to Jews (and Muslims) in the excerpt above is a reflection of the third dimension of radicalization in this period, namely, (ethno)-religious. Aviv (2017), who argues that anti-Semitism in Turkish discourse is not entirely new, claims that until the 1990s, it was primarily associated with marginal Islamic hardliners. By the mid-2000s, however, occasional anti-Semitic statements had been made by mainstream Turkish officials, including Erdoğan and several of his cabinet ministers. In addition, two infamous anti-Semitic accounts, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Hitler’s Mein Kempf, which were first translated to Turkish in the 1940s, became bestsellers in 2004-2005 (Aviv, 2017). Still, save a few occasional reports of anti-Semitism in Turkey (cf. Ravid, 2005), in the first period of our research, hardly any mentions of the surge in religious radicalism in the country are to be found in the Israeli media.

In contrast, a major surge in media coverage of the topic is noticeable after 2009. The coverage underlined two main sources or spaces, of anti-Semitic discourse. The first was Turkish popular television series, such as Ayrılık: Aşkta ve Savashta Filistin (Separation: Palestine at Love and War), which depicted IDF soldiers as cold-blooded killers of Palestinian babies and Kurtlar Vadisi: Filistin (Valley of the Wolves: Palestine), in which Israel is a sponsor of the Turkish Mafia and Mossad agents kidnap Turkish children and forcibly convert them to Judaism.

According to Israeli media, a second, more popular space for spreading anti-Semitic messages were signs posted across Turkish cities. Despite their rareness, in several occasions it reported of merchants who posted signs outside their business establishments reading “Dogs allowed, but not Jews” (Ynet, 2009). Reminiscent of Nazi propaganda, which likened Jews to animals, these signs were seen as spatial manifestations of the rising popular hatred toward (Israeli) Jews in Turkey. Not surprisingly, the signs were accompanied by strong anti-Semitic language in social media. Networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Tweeter became a breeding ground for virulent expressions against Jews. Reportedly, in 2014 alone, more than 30,000 Turkish tweets expressed
support of Hitler’s genocide (Klein, 2014). Alongside “everyday” citizens, Turkish celebrities also partook in anti-Semitic discourse, such as when famous singer Yıldız Tilbe, in response to hostilities during Operation Protective Edge, tweeted “May, Allah bless Hitler” (Ynet, 2014b).

The second discursive strategy used in this period was emotionalization, which heightened emotional reactions of Israelis, primarily tourists, toward Turkey and their visit. Fear was by far the most overemphasized emotion captured in media reporting, especially among Israelis who canceled their planned trip on account of the country’s radicalization process (Kristal, 2014). Adjectives such as dreamy and heavenly were replaced with depictions of Turkey as hostile and dangerous (Mizrahi, 2009), and reports highlighted tourists’ fear of leaving their hotels or venturing too far beyond their immediate surrounding (Vidal, 2009). Alarming surveys, reporting that nearly 90% of Israeli tourists believe that Turkey is dangerous for the Israeli tourist (Globes, 2009a), appeared regularly. The sense of fear was exacerbated by evidence from the Jewish community in Istanbul whose members reported experiencing harsher treatment by Turkish state and society (Farkash, 2013).

A second emotion underscored by the media was the sense of (Israeli) insult and humiliation on account of what was described as Turkey’s betrayal. Especially for those who had vacationed there regularly, Turkey was not merely a tourist destination but “a second home” (Mizrahi, 2009). Dani Zimet, the owner of a marketing communication agency and a representative of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Israel, was quoted saying, “Israelis are insulted[...]. Especially in light of the warm connections formed between Israelis and Turkey, they feel like a betrayed spouse. Israelis – and I, personally – are offended by the reactions” (Mizrahi, 2009).

Humiliation was also reported as a feeling experienced by some Israeli tourists who visited Turkey during this period. In one incident, forty Israeli passengers were held up at Istanbul’s airport. The incident occurred five days after the publication of The Palmer Report and in response to Israel’s refusal to apologize for the death of nine Turkish nationals during the flotilla incident. Their treatment by Turkish security forces was described by one of the passengers as follows:

They detained us one by one, asked us to take out the entire content of our handbags. They threw the contents on the table disgracefully. They asked us to take off our shoes[...] then they took us into a dark room. They[...]spoke only Turkish to us[...] They stripped me down to my underpants, they even asked me to remove my bra” (Madzini and Magnezi, 2011).

Feelings of personal offense soon congealed into a sense of humiliatd national dignity and, consequently, practices of retaliation. Israeli politicians reacted harshly to the Turkish disrespect toward tourists, suggesting that Israelis refrain from visiting the country. Minister of Tourism Misazhnikov, for example, claimed “we are talking about a radical country that wants to hurt our national pride. It is recommended not to go there” (Avigad and Ben Israel, 2010) and “We must ostracize Turkey completely from a touristic perspective. We must preserve our national honor” (Wolf, 2010). As Israelis made up only 5% of total incoming tourism to Turkey at the time, the potential economic impact of such practices was clearly limited. However, they should be seen as important acts intended to boost national morale. In the words of Yossi Barel, an expert on consumer behavior, “This time its about pride[...] of ego[...] (Globes, 2009b) [The Turkish blow] was emotional and threatened a huge common denominator: the national field” (Hayoun and Rosenblum, 2009).

Alongside official calls for “payback,” bottom-up boycotts have also been initiated. Shortly after the Davos incident, a host of private and public Israeli entities announced they would no longer send their employees on package tours to Turkey (Sade, 2009). The practical implication of the boycott, which included some of Israel’s largest employers, was the elimination of Turkey as a travel destination for hundreds of
thousands of Israeli workers. As bilateral relations deteriorated, a private Israeli consumers’ boycott soon followed. Attesting to the emotional basis of the boycott, the vice president of one of Israel’s largest travel agencies concluded, “This is the largest consumers’ boycott since the establishment of Israel because the Turks have hurt Israelis emotionally. We have had ups and downs with other countries. However, never like this’ (Rosenblum, 2011).

Conclusions

The article analyzes how geographic imagination shapes the construction of tourist destinations. Drawing on analysis of the Israeli discourse concerning tourism to Turkey between 2000 and 2014, it illustrates how political and diplomatic events have transformed the ways in which Israeli visitors imagined the country. Specifically, while in the early period it was depicted in predominantly positive geo-cultural terms – as a desired, culturally “authentic” destination, which elicits strong feelings of ease, happiness and peacefulness – narratives of later years underscored its negative geopolitical qualities, stressing Turkey’s ostensible anti-Israel stance and invoking a fearful discourse of (geo) political and religious radicalization.

The discursive transformation, largely attributed to Operation Cast Lead and the flotilla incident, not only bequeathed a sharp decline in the volume of Israeli tourism to Turkey but also totally re-constituted the Israeli geographic gaze on the country. From a geoculturally neutral construction, endowed with alluring cultural attributes characteristic of Mediterranean countries, Turkey has morphed into a geopolitically involved entity, which sides with Israel’s adversaries, and, consequently, endangers – in discourse and practice – its touring citizens.

The paper makes several contributions, which could be useful for scholars researching the nexus between tourism and geopolitics. Two are worth mentioning in brief. First, in contrast to studies examining the effect of geopolitical events on touristic fluctuations, the current article focuses on the discursive process which accompanied such events and analyzes its changes over time. Such a dynamic perspective is not only more sensitive to the changes but also allows us a more nuanced understanding of the temporal construction of various narratives. Future studies should further unpack the different meanings touristic narratives are endowed with at different times. Second, discursive changes in the Israeli media exemplify the fluid nature of touristic imaginations but also the different forces which shape them. Thus, while the Turkish Government-sponsored tourism campaign in the early part of the researched period may have had a positive effect on the country’s media representation, the formation of an Israeli right-wing coalition in the beginning of the later part (2009) may have had an opposite effect. Future research should uncover the role played by these and other sources and explore the extent to which they use particular strategies to shape specific touristic imaginations.

Notes

1. The Marmara ship was part of a flotilla from Turkey aimed at breaking the Israeli naval blockade on the Gaza Strip. Nine Turkish civilians were killed during the Israeli commando takeover of the ship (Alvarez and Campo, 2014).

2. Orientalism is “‘[A] style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the orient’ and[…] ‘the occident’ (Said, 1978, p. 10).”

3. CCDA aims at deciphering the cultural codes within the discourse as a key to critical analysis. It seeks to expose “discursive strategies” — discursive manipulations created through narratives, metaphors, myths and symbols, that aim to influencing readers (Gaviely-Nuri, 2015).

4. In 1965, bilateral trade amounted to $30m, increasing to $4.3bn by 2017 (Bengio, 2004; Kirshenbaum, 2018).
5. One of our informants called the operation “The worst landslide in [Israel-Turkey] relations” (PI1) and another claimed it was a turning point because it “intensified anti-Israel sentiments in the[...] Turkish media” (PI10).

6. During his meeting with Ambassador Cellikol, Israel’s deputy foreign minister told cameramen that the ambassador was seated on a sofa that was lower than his own chair and that no Turkish flags were on display on purpose.

**Personal interviews**

PI6. Izi Madam, Owner, Easy Travel, December 5, 2014.
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Foreigners, fakes and flycatchers: stereotypes, social encounters and the problem of discomfort on the street in Arusha, Tanzania

Martin Loeng

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to contribute to research on the interrelations between urban tourism, travelling and landscapes. It shows how young visitors to the tourism-reliant city of Arusha, northern Tanzania, experience and interpret discomfiting encounters with street sellers by drawing on stereotypes circulating in guidebooks, online forums and in the tourism industry. In turn, such re-interpreted encounters are increasingly seen as problematic for the city’s development of urban tourism.

Design/methodology/approach – The author draws on extensive ethnographic fieldwork with tourist-product street sellers in Arusha and Moshi, Tanzania in 2015–2017. With detail-oriented focus on social interaction and communication, the author has used participant observation and interviews to understand the perspectives and actions involved. Complementing this, the author draws on interviews with tour companies and local authorities to connect everyday occurrences with broader political, economic and urban transformations.

Findings – This paper explores the interrelation between changing urban landscapes, gentrification and burgeoning urban tourism by highlighting not only how streets are created and sought to be re-created but how also re-interpreted stories and stereotypes fundamentally influence how it is understood by local authorities. As the consumption of place, shopping and foreigners’ experiences take centre stage in Arusha’s urban development project, practices and people that are re-interpreted as causes of discomfort, become objects of ordering and discipline.

Originality/value – This paper emphasizes that the social encounters beyond dichotomies of host–guest relationships are a fruitful and important means of investigating how “encounters” connect space to power, the street to urban planning and mundane on-the-street interactions to processes of transformation and gentrification. This paper presents a reading of “landscapes” not as a text, but as a series of encounters that catch our attention when and where they break our norms, or the norms of others.

Keywords Emotions, Social interaction, East Africa, Urban tourism, Gentrification, Street sellers

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

When tourists and travellers in the northern Tanzanian tourism-hub of Arusha enter public spaces, they frequently find themselves entangled in encounters with street sellers where lines of socio-cultural difference and poverty and wealth colour their experience. These encounters are often sources of confusion and discomfort that many travellers find difficult to navigate (Hottola, 2004, 2005). Narrated in travellers’ stories interpersonally, in online forums or as advice and warnings in guidebooks, these uncomfortable experiences of “being unequal” have increasingly become sources of municipal and political concern. In

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this paper, I explore the power of the stereotype of the “flycatcher” and that of the “fake” as tools tourists and travellers use to represent street sellers and to solve interactional confusions they experience in social encounters. “Flycatcher” used to largely refer to an informal economic role in on-the-street tourism marketing for local tour companies. Today, however, “flycatcher” increasingly signifies a local person who employs cunning conversational techniques to “catch” tourists and travellers in a sticky web of emotions, obligation, and discomfort. This change indicates the discursive (and economic) centring of foreigners’ experiences, which has implications for how tourist-product street sellers are perceived.

Because of these stereotypical narratives of what on-the-street social encounters are like, the street sellers’ use of public space has come into conflict with local and national authorities who seek to make and brand the city as a comfortable “Eco-Tourism Capital of East Africa” (Lobulu, 2016; Nkwame, 2015; Quire, 2015; Rugonzibwa, 2016). Responding to governmental demands to increase revenue from tourism (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2016), this involves reshaping central city areas as spaces of tourism, leisure and consumption where foreign visitors “feel free”, as one town planner put it. Public, informal encounters between street sellers selling curios and foreign visitors that do not follow ideals of service and leisure are increasingly seen as causes of bad experiences and discomfort that are inimical to the leisurely atmosphere and economic productivity of the tourism landscapes these plans envision.

Drawing off ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Arusha, I show the underlying dynamics and complexities of the discomforts of inequality through a discussion of the stereotypes of “fakes” and “flycatchers” that have come to represent street sellers. Using interactionist concepts, I elaborate on the pragmatic function of negative stereotypes as “maps” and methods of prefiguring social encounters sometimes used by confused and uncertain foreign visitors to regain a sense of control (Kockelman, 2010, 2012; Hottola, 2004, 2005). In turn, I show how this usage articulates a warped image of how discomfort emerges. This raises an important line of questioning: How are discomfiting emotions and experiences understood? How are they thought to emerge? Are the street sellers and/or the foreigners considered responsible for the discomfort that may arise in on-the-street encounters? I show how foreign visitors use commonly available stereotypes of deceptiveness and fakeness to navigate such emotions and to reinterpret how and why they emerge – enacting a form of emotional fetishism (Ahmed, 2014); that is, they ascribe inherently relational and interactional discomforts to the street sellers as people who cause discomfort. I locate the power of these negative stereotypes in how they circulate through guidebooks, online forums and by word of mouth, as they feed back into and influence ongoing political struggles over access to and participation in Arusha’s public spaces, highlighting the significance ascribed to tourists’ encounters with poverty and socio-economic difference (Terkenli, 2014).

The expanding literature on tourism and landscapes across the social sciences has focussed on landscapes as built environments laden with often staged playing out of meaningfulness (Metro-Roland, 2011); on the artful and unintended construction of meaning in tourist landscapes (Knudsen et al., 2008); and on the performativity of tourism and tourist spaces (Edensor, 2001, 2007). Drawing on an understanding of landscapes and urban spaces as produced and made meaningful through everyday practices (Goonewardena, 2008; Kipfer and Goonewardena, 2013; Lefebvre, 1992), this article contributes to the expanding literature on travelling, tourism and landscapes that seek to understand meaning and power simultaneously. I go beyond a Foucauldian reading of landscape as setting, laden text or scenery by emphasizing how researchers can demonstrate and trace when and where particular meanings emerge, become charged and become powerful (Knudsen et al., 2008). I emphasize the analytical value of focussing on the details of social encounters as sites where the everyday meets the political-economic. As Arusha
undergoes urban and tourism developments that entail gentrifying transformations, in which tourists and travellers’ experiences and encounters increasingly become sites of economic production, two interrelated questions emerge: Who are considered legitimate “producers” of and participants in these landscapes? And, who has the “right” to encounter tourists and travellers in public space?

In this paper, I first give an overview over the fieldwork and qualitative, ethnographic research conducted before going on to give an outline of the analytical importance of the notion of “encounters”. Next, I present a series of cases through which I demonstrate the creation of and use of negative stereotypes such as «flycatcher» and in turn how they circulate through public and online forums and guidebooks. Lastly, I argue that the perception of what it feels like to travel in Arusha and to encounter street sellers both misapprehends the important factor of “discomfort” in a way that plays into local struggles over city spaces and threatens to exacerbate the inequalities that are already inscribed in the landscape.

Arusha, fieldwork and methods

The northern Tanzanian city of Arusha has been and will be a cornerstone for the government’s ambitions to drastically increase foreign exchange earnings from tourism (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2016). As a transportation hub, Arusha receives the majority of visitors to Tanzania because of its accommodation capacity, proximity to an international airport and to mountaineering and wildlife safari areas across the northern region. Self-employed street sellers I worked with during my PhD fieldwork were both young and old. Most of them had changed livelihood strategies numerous times in response to political changes (from socialist to neoliberal policies in the later 1980s) and changes in tourism (changes in foreigners’ preferences). Since the late 1980s, emerging locally owned tour companies that did not have access to international marketing networks had relied on relatives, friends and acquaintances to do on-the-street marketing as brokers for a commission fee. With the advent of smartphones, communication technology and online booking, however, this role became less of a valid livelihood option. Today, most have turned to selling tourist products such as paintings and wax prints showing Mount Kilimanjaro, Maasai villages and safari animals; colourful bracelets; or informal, freelance guiding for city or village tours. Securing face-to-face contact with foreign visitors on the street has therefore both become more important as a means of gaining an income, while it has gradually become harder to do so.

During my fieldwork in 2015–2017, I have used ethnographic methods focussing on close participant observation and interviews with street sellers who operate on central streets and intersections in Arusha. These groups of people, who travel into the city centre every morning and leave after dark, form the core of my PhD research. I have conducted interviews and group interviews with younger travellers or volunteers in Arusha who use Arusha city spaces as sightseeing tourists, to rest between tours or work and as spaces of leisure, focussing on their experiences with walking in public and encountering street sellers. I have also conducted interviews with five municipal officials and town planners, ten managers and directors of small and large tour companies and two branches of tourism marketing offices. Using an interactionist analytical lens that orients towards the dynamics of participants in face-to-face interactional engagements, I have detailed the different social, spatial and communicative strategies that street sellers and foreign visitors use to negotiate their encounters – as well as the power-relations that are negotiated and expressed through the use of stereotypes (van Dijk, 2009, 1997; Simoni, 2013). Unlike many other forms of ethnography, this means I take the face-to-face encounter as a key analytical unit (Atkinson and Housley, 2003; Emerson, 2009; Enfield, 2013; Enfield et al., 2014; Jacobsen, 2017; Keating, 2001; Kockelman, 2012; van Dijk, 2009, 1997) – sometimes referred to as micro-ethnography in language and education studies (Garcez, 1997;
Streeck and Mehus, 2005). The key analytical connection I have made is between how social encounters between foreigners and street sellers play out on the street and how authorities and tourism stakeholders understand and seek to change this interactional and emotional aspect of Arusha city streets.

In terms of terminology, I have chosen to follow my street selling interlocutors’ concepts – identifying not hosts and guests, but rather wazungu (white, European and Western people) or more prominently wageni (foreigners, strangers and guests). I use the categories “foreign visitors” and “street sellers” to refer to emic terms that were central to most of my tourists’ and Tanzanian interlocutors’ understanding of their encounters with each other. There is little analytical room for defining street sellers as “hosts” because hosting is an achieved status, a space of social and economic opportunity that tour companies and freelance street sellers often compete for. The status of “host” cannot always be taken for granted. I therefore do not study social encounters as kinds of host–guest relations (Pútová, 2018), but instead see them in term of their own situational context because context is itself a part of the work of the encounter (Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz, 2011; Park and Takanashi, 2011). Using an interactionist lens, I have analysed my data for social, spatial and communicative strategies, using qualitative coding software. For interview data and field-note observations pertaining to tourists and volunteers, I coded for tendencies in, reflections on and narratives of moral dilemmas, emotions, ways of travelling and attitudes, which I then triangulated with interactional data and observations. The ethnographic cases I draw on in this article, however, are not intended to accurately represent the complexity of social interactions between visitors and locals, but rather to demonstrate how micro-analyses of stereotypes in action can be tied to broader processes of urban transformation and gentrification. I will explore the complexity of racial, class and gendered concepts in these encounters in future publications and research.

**Confusing and discomfiting encounters**

Social encounters with local persons are a defining feature of tourism and travel, as well as being a key analytical concept of the social sciences of tourism (Gibson, 2012). Social encounters can be staged or incidental, anticipated or unanticipated and provide social scientists with a unit that can be analysed, compared and approached from numerous angles. Encounters are understood as host–guest relationships (Pútová, 2018); as guided encounters through which trained guides narrate and negotiate productive imaginaries of safari landscapes (Salazar, 2012, 2014); and as tactile and symbolic encounters with curated materials and cultural symbols (Terkenli, 2014). The value of social encounters for the study of tourism and travelling lies in that it is a site which we may use to connect theoretical, analytical and demonstrable empirical strata: connecting everyday practice and political economy; embodiment and discourses of power; persons, meanings and places; preference, consumption and economy; as well as being the situated moments in which manifold negotiations of meaning, identity and citizenship take place. Social encounters with local persons is for many both desirable and something to avoid, promising both excitement and discomfort (Hottola, 2002, 2004, 2005; Gibson, 2012). Enclavic spaces such as resorts, hotels and restaurants in Arusha, we find that encounters and spaces themselves are curated and managed specifically to minimize jarring sensations and experiences that might be experienced in more public spaces (Carlisle and Jones, 2012; Edensor, 2001, 2007).

Salazar (2012, 2014) shows how Tanzania’s natural, social and urban landscapes are narrated and negotiated by trained guides in interaction with tourists through which global tourism imaginaries are made economically productive and discursively powerful in the encounters themselves. Waitt et al. (2008) and Tucker (2009) point out that analytical attention to encounters allows us to critically study the role and productivity of emotional responses to social, cultural and economic differences in relation to a number of themes.
This has been done by attending to the role of emotional responses to difference in a range of contexts (Ahmed, 2000, 2014; Tucker, 2009; Waitt et al., 2008), as well as the role of moral dilemmas in such encounters (Mostafanezhad and Hannam, 2016; Tucker, 2016). Many of the young tourist, backpackers or volunteers I interviewed during my fieldwork reported profound uncertainties and discomforts relating to street sellers in public because many were not used to being approached in public. The unreflexive habits they bring with them into walking in public spaces are disrupted when norms of civil inattention are not followed, when they are held accountable to their own presence, drawn into action, consciousness and heightened awareness (Edensor, 2001, 2007). During one interview, a Scandinavian man stressed that being in a foreign public space in the first place is confusing and uncomfortable:

We’re not used to someone coming and trying to sell you things, that’s just the worst for the tourists. So, it’s not so strange that most people don’t walk around on the street [in Arusha]. To say that you don’t want something, that is not easy for a lot of people, you’re not used to it. It gets uncomfortable fast.

While many had a desire to see and understand Arusha, Tanzania or even Africa, encounters with street sellers often needed reflection and interpretation to understand what had happened, to deal with doubt, work through moral and emotional confusion and find useful interactive strategies for the future. Most reflected on the use of conversational sales techniques through the notion of being “pushy” or were aggrieved about prices elevated for foreigners (“mzungu-price”). Some said that they felt like “walking wallets” or “walking dollar-signs”. Encounters with begging or requests for support – which were a part of the repertoire many street sellers had – evoked an unease, sense of obligation or guilt that many found it difficult to navigate. These were also the experiences that employees in the tourism industry pointed out as usumbufo (annoyance and disturbance). This experience is reported as stress or increased emotional reaction; as a sense of being “forced” or “trapped” to look at paintings or bracelets held out in front of them by street sellers; and as a (unwanted) sense of guilt, pity or sympathy for the Tanzanian counterpart. Some express this sense of obligation through irritation or frustration directed outward at those they have met on the street, whereas others become more contemplative and somewhat confused about what the “right” thing to do could be. In situations where these emotions arise, stereotypes are often (consciously or not) used to map a way out of the situation and out of the sensed “trap”. Because street sellers recognize the play of emotional and moral discomfort in foreign visitors, they have learned to interact with, play down or amplify emotionally and morally charged expressions as a part of how they create social, cultural and economic opportunities for interaction and exchange (Ceesay, 2016; Simoni, 2014; Stodulka, 2014; Tucker, 2009, 2016).

The relationality of this process often remains hidden behind the power of stereotypes, as the narratives themselves obscure this relationality, even as they work to increase the travellers’ sense of interactional competence and agency. I argue that micro-ethnographic analyses of social encounters for tourism studies are valuable tools because they allow us to break up this obfuscation. They allow us to dissect “precisely the agents, moments and techniques of the exercise of power in tourism encounters […] “ (Gibson, 2012, p. 59). More than analysing social interactions in detail, we are well served by tracing the outcomes and consequences of these dynamics, asking what do different kinds of encounters seem to “produce”, apart from sales, conversation and foreign exchange earnings.

Here, I ask how the discursive and economic centring of foreign visitors’ experiences of discomfort and confusion in public may impact on-going struggles for access to urban public space in Arusha (Hunter, 2013; Namwata and Mgabo, 2012). I suggest a way to understand this by tracing a connection between often confusing public encounters, the narratives and stereotypes used to understand them and how these stereotypes gain traction in the Arusha municipality’s visions and plans to create a new “Eco-Tourism Capital...
of East Africa”. I show how stereotypes that foreign visitors use pragmatically to map a way out of a confusing situation and out of the sensed “trap”, also construct the street sellers, the stereotyped, as agents that disrupt atmospheres of comfort (Gibson, 2010, p. 526). In effect, then, at a time when cross-communication between urban elites and residents is needed, negative stereotypes of street sellers contribute to driving a wedge between the formal and self-employed portion of Arusha. Stories of feeling like a “walking wallet” or “mzungu price” contribute to the impression that the street sellers and local authorities work towards fundamentally different kinds of landscapes, forces competing to define the purpose of public space (Greer et al., 2008). In what follows, I trace a line from how such stereotypes are used in encounters themselves and are also woven into accounts of such encounters.

“Fake rasta”

Paul is a young European Social Science student who at the time had been visiting and working in Arusha for several months. His encounter with a Tanzanian man whom he called a “fake rasta” highlights how stereotypes are used to map a way out of confusing encounters by applying the stereotype to the interaction counterpart. In the small tourism-thoroughfare of Mto wa Mbu outside Arusha “some people, like in Arusha, they try to get some money from tourists”. After sundown, he sat down to eat chipsi mayai (eggs and chips) and a “fake rasta” allegedly attempted to sell him the dish for 500 Shilling [less than €1] more than it was normally worth by stepping in between the cook and Paul as an impromptu translator. After a short verbal rejection, Paul describes how:

[...]

he start to talk to me, like, 'e-eh-eh, where are you from? Bla-bla, how are you?" okay [...] bla-bla [...] and he asked me if I wanted to look [at] what he was doing because he was doing like painting and a lot of things, you know, by himself [...].

Paul had turned down the request and the response his rejection elicited was uttered, according to his imitating performance of it, through a plaintive, high-pitched tone of voice, with a facial expression of slight furrowed eyebrows: “Okay, you don’t want to support, why you [...]”. He immediately interrupts himself with a voice of frustration:

[...] and I said, “why do I have to support? Why do I have to support? I am supporting this guy making chipsi because I am buying chips, I am eating chips, I’m supporting the guy who own the guest house because I am sleeping there, so I am supporting people every day, so why do I have to support you?”

The centrepiece of this interview was the intensity of the encounter, ignited by Paul’s recollection that the conversation had suddenly turned from one concerning a purchase of paintings, to one in which the “fake rasta” had evoked the notion of “support” in a plaintive, high-pitched voice. The way Paul recalls the phrase aligns with my own research on certain street sellers’ strategies in Arusha geared towards evoking ideas of socio-economic difference, poverty, wealth and charity in an open-ended request for support. What is more, the phrase “Okay, you don’t want to support, why you [...] “ foregrounds the interpretation that Paul had chosen specifically to not want to support him. Not only was the encounter up to that point difficult to negotiate for Paul but also now both a sense of accountability, perhaps accusation, and a morally charged sense of “obligation” had burst into being.

After several rounds of rejecting the man’s offers, the temperature rose. It is at this point that the stereotype of the “fake” emerges as an interactional tool. “So he start like to be a bit angry at me,” he tells me animatedly, wagging his finger at me in performance:

[...] like “oh, you are a bad boy, you don’t want to support, you bla-bla-bla, you sure you don’t want to look? You don’t want to support, ah, you a bad boy”.

To which Paul reportedly responded:
‘Man, you don’t know anything about me and, no really I don’t even like it […] […] there’s a lot of people who need support, and they’re selling things or trying to do things to get it, you know, but you’re not doing anything, you’re just here, around.’ He was not selling, he didn’t have his things with him, you cannot say that he was [the] artist doing things, selling things, he’s just, you know, drunk rasta going around here because it was nice, and so, yeah, just like why do I have to support you now? And even you- you’re not working, I mean […] just want money now to get drunk maybe, or […]? What do you want?!

He exclaimed animatedly.

When the situation got most intense, the implication of fakeness was articulated as an argument against supporting him and so mapping a more morally justified a way out of the sense and experience of confusion, accusation and obligation. At the outset of the interview, Paul identified the man from Mto wa Mbu as a “fake rasta” and so the work of applying a stereotype has already started as far as the retelling was concerned. As he explained it, “fakeness” referred to using global symbols of Rastafarianism, buttressed by appeals for charity, “mostly to attract tourists”. It was someone who wore “just dreadlocks” without the lifestyle and personal commitment to Rastafarianism. It was defined as someone who draws off performances of Rastafarian expression, gestures and accents, because it’s “one of the main [ways] of imaging Africa [in Europe]”. “It’s their playing on this identity because it’s working with tourists […] it’s like you’re playing a role and I don’t like it.” In rejecting this social connection as “fake,” deceptive and instrumentally motivated, Paul is evoking a trickster-like stereotype that shares characteristics with the notions of the “flycatcher”. Other ways of identifying this among young travellers, I have noted, is the use of ingratiating strategies associated with “sob stories”, “doing the Bambi-eyes” or “pulling the heart strings”.

When evasive techniques do not work – such as pretending to not hear or see the street seller hailing them, saying hello but moving on or simply saying “No, thank you” – and foreign visitors feel “caught” or “trapped”, strategies of disentanglement such as this are common. Creating the image, verbally or not, of the instrumental, the fake, the untrustworthy person has several consequences. First, it may disarm the sense of connection, guilt, discomfort, obligation and the ringing melody of the “heart strings”, by reducing the moral status of the other. Because the man from Mto wa Mbu is a “fake”, possibly just looking to get drunk, Paul is morally obligated to not support him, perhaps inadvertently explaining why he has chosen not to support him. Second, it reframes or remaps the definition of the situation – it re-maps who is defined as what, what their relationships are and what the intentions and consequences and outcomes of their actions are. By drawing on the image of the “fake”, Paul has re-routed the conversation’s “trajectory” (Strauss, 1993) from one of transaction and support, to one where both leave each other alone; from entanglement towards disentanglement.

The third consequence is to remap and redefine narratives of causal relations of feeling and experience. Following Kockelman’s (2012) work on the semiotics of interaction, the “paths” in an intersubjective mapping of a situation describe the causes and effects perceived in the world. “Origins” are understood as causes and “Destinations” are grasped as effects and outcomes – liked or disliked, intended or unintended. At least part of the discomfort Paul expresses is related to his sense of lost control over the mapping of the situation and where it is heading (Hottola, 2004, 2005 on a sense of “control”). Emotions are inherently a matter of inter-embodiment, relational experiences whose causal relations are analytically non-linear and whose histories are complex (Ahmed, 2014). Yet, what the use of stereotypes to disentangle oneself in these cases tend to do is to ascribe emotional causality upon the other, obfuscating the complexities and histories of these emotions through the implication of fakeness and instrumentality – what Sara Ahmed calls “emotional fetishism” (Ibid.). Once situations are re-mapped through these stereotypical qualities, the man from Mto wa Mbu emerges as the cause of discomfort and uncertainty by having instrumental motivations ascribed to him. In turn, these stereotypical re-mappings begin to influence how others see the landscapes of Arusha, how it feels to travel through them and
who is responsible for what kinds of feelings. By questioning the man’s moral status (drunkenness) and his motives (instrumentality through deceptive uses of Rastafarian culture) through appealing to charity, then, Paul is able to externalize responsibility for his experience; after all, the “fake rasta” intended to appeal to Rastafarian culture and Paul’s emotions to build trust and pull his heartstrings.

A landscape mapped with stereotypes

The ascription of instrumentality and deceptiveness works to “map” a way out of awkward and uncomfortable situations and can become a habitual way of thinking and acting. In the case later, I show how this is not only conceivable as a kind a reaction to or a reflection on personal experiences but also can prefigure those experiences and shape how travellers engage with places and people. In what follows, a young North American man called Adam tells of his and some volunteer friends’ methods of playing games with “flycatchers” that turned their tactics back on them, illustrating how they operated with stereotypes that prefigure encounters:

So, I was being “flycaught”, and a lot of the times when they are trying to sell me things, I will talk to them about their own lives and experiences. So, one time as this is happening, I convinced him to give me his roll of paintings. So, he hands them over to me, his friends in the background laughing, and I start chasing after white people, using the same lines as they used on me, with a notably terrible Tanzanian accent. So, uhm [...] I was very aggressive about it because I felt very comfortable as another tourist type, uhm, sort of being aggressive in the face of other tourists.

He continues:

The most common and basic [game], we would come up with fake backstories. So you have the same kind of conversation [you] would normally have if you were trying to not be an asshole. So generally you have to pick a place you are from, and an accent to match, you have to have a fake occupation and an intimate knowledge about your role in the “coal industry”.

Adam’s games play with the agencies through which we establish intersubjective agreement on the frame or “map” of the social encounter (Kockelman, 2012). In another game, he and his friends attempted “to buy something small and try to get a good price” while the person leading the negotiation pretended to be mute. The import of his games are that they deliberately counteract the feeling of “being flycaught” – the feeling of being trapped by the presence and demands of another person in an unequal relation. The most clear expression of this was the “clueless” game, which he described in this way:

[... ] when we’re on a street corner and waiting, they will gravitate towards us and surround us, and so we’ll pretend to be utterly clueless. So when they ask questions about who we are and where we are going, we would answer, “Who are we really?” and we would get into existential crises over who we are and why we’re here.

What these games all have in common is to reconfigure the mapping of the encounter as a parody or reversal of “being flycaught”. In doing so, however, he presupposes the relevance of the stereotype of the “flycatcher”: it is the stereotype of the “flycatcher” that is reversed, which makes these games make sense, giving the stereotype the power of a definitive assumption as well as the power to take control of otherwise confusing interactions. Either by having a fake backstory or pretending to be mute, the rules of the interaction itself are changed, such that he escapes the grip that conversation sometimes can have. Adam explained that the “games” were ways of moving past the conversation “scripts” that “flycatchers” use:

If you flip the situation, or not flip the situation but [...] put them in a situation where they don’t know exactly what to do, you know, how when we are going through that basic greeting script, like “Mambo” “Poa”, [a common Swahili greeting pair] that stuff, and the other persons says something you’ve never heard before, you don’t know how to react, you don’t know what to say, which somehow becomes more genuine [...] Our games work kind of in the same way, they break, you know, the script.
Adam’s games illustrate how concepts such as “flycatcher” can prefigure ways of interacting with local others. Indeed, such stereotypes can become the basis for a kind of travellers’ knowledge, as is evident in guidebooks. The young travellers I interviewed drew on knowledge gleaning from online forums, guidebooks, fellow travellers and tour companies’ advice and websites, to navigate Arusha’s urban landscapes. These sources of information provide visitors to Arusha with maps, both figuratively and literally, that lay out what kinds of people populate Arusha’s landscapes and how travellers should relate to them. These sources not only paint the landscape that visitors will travel through but also give conceptual tools for prefiguring it social encounters.

The 2015 Rough Guide to Tanzania, carried by one traveller I interviewed, gave advice on navigating the main tourist areas in Arusha:

Avoid wearing anything brand-new, especially white, and make sure your shoes aren’t too shiny. Some tourists swear by sunglasses to avoid making unwanted eye contact; while this usually works to fend off hasslers it also cuts you off from everyone else (Finke, 2015, p. 71).

In the 2009 edition of Lonely Planet Tanzania, the traveller is given advice on strategies of behaviour around bus stops: “Duck into a shop if you need to get your bearings or look at a map and don’t walk around any more than necessary with your luggage,” (Fitzpatrick et al., 2009, p. 336). Consider the glossary of the 2015 edition of Lonely Planet’s guide to Tanzania, which I borrowed from one European traveller I interviewed, featuring this definition:

Flycatcher – used mainly in Arusha and Moshi to mean a tout working to get you to go on safari with an operator from whom he knows he can get a commission. We assume the name comes from a comparison with the sticky-sweet paper used to lure flies to land (and then get irretrievably stuck) – similar to the plight of a hapless traveller who succumbs to a flycatcher’s promises and is the “stick” (i.e. with their money and time lost in a fraudulent safari deal) (Fitzpatrick et al., 2015, p. 399).

This definition instils in visitors to Arusha an ability to recognize “a flycatcher’s promises”, “fraudulent safari deals” and to avoid “succumbing” and being haplessly “stuck”. It foregrounds the interactional and cultural incompetence that many foreign visitors experience, through the notion of “succumbing” and the “hapless traveller” (Hottola, 2002, 2004, 2005; Manley et al., 2016). It defines certain kinds of public social encounters before arrival, pre-configuring how interactions might play out and how emotions are understood. Relational and emotional experiences emerge as linear cause-and-effect relations: the origin or cause of false promises is the street seller recast as a “flycatcher”, its destination or effect “a fraudulent safari deal”. The path between these two points is lined with attempts to “lure” and experiential “stickiness” that resonates with feelings of being obligated or feeling “trapped” to purchase items, to sympathize or to support street sellers.

When I delved into what a “flycatcher” was defined as in Arusha, two distinct understandings emerged. One more historical and socio-economic definition used by Tanzanian employees in the local tourism industry emphasized “flycatchers” as tourism brokers and on-the-street mediators who had been crucial in helping to market the services of emerging local tour companies and hotels/hostels without international marketing networks after liberalization in the late 1980s. These were often friends and relatives employed at commission rates who approached foreign visitors at bus stops or on the street in the hope that they needed advice, directions or connections with a tour company or hotel/hostel. The newer definition, however, echoes the Lonely Planet glossary, reflecting not an historical or socio-economic role that may fit into the broader notion of productive citizenship, but a fixation with (negative) travelling experiences: a type of person who lures, entraps, hassles and hustles the hapless traveller. This newer definition is prominent today and even among persons in the tourism industry the issue of hassle and usumbufu (annoyance and disturbance) is foregrounded as an urban-political problem associated with hawkers and “flycatchers”. As a result of the circulation of this newer definition of “flycatchers”, the term is used to connote people who cause discomfort
in foreigner visitors. The landscape of Arusha is today increasingly perceived to be populated by emotional “flycatchers”.

The street sellers I spent most of my fieldwork with were highly aware of the many stereotypes surrounding them. Some street sellers’ conversational strategies focussed on conspicuous politeness towards foreigners to not be threatening and to build trust more quickly. Kishongo, a close interlocutor, had a term for foreigners who had not taken to heart warnings about “flycatchers”, a person with moyo msafi (a clean/pure heart). For him it was easy to spot a person with moyo msafi because they did not make nervous, evasive movements, they looked him in the eyes and their bodies faced him directly. Foreigners' nervousness, evasiveness and the occasional hostility were feelings that the street sellers had to learn to negotiate, tolerate and work through. This fact is entirely obscured from the stories that circulate about them as they are recast as kinds of “flycatchers”. Obfuscating the historical role of tourism brokers, it increasingly refers to people who cause foreign visitors to feel “caught”. This definition hides not only a subject position but also mapping, a tool for travelling couched in emotionally fetishist stereotypes. Because of their perceived usefulness, these stereotypes are given the power to paint a picture of Arusha at a much larger scale than individual encounters. What emerges is an interactional map writ larger onto the urban landscape of Arusha, which prompts the local tourism industry to react and protect the reputation of its city as a destination.

Feeling “the Eco-Tourism Capital of East Africa”

Foreign visitors’ experiences and emotions can be understood as productive in numerous ways. Some street sellers find that these strong emotions can, in some cases, be grounds for connecting with foreigners and can in a sense be socially and economically productive, once initial mistrust is relieved. Foreign visitors’ strong emotional responses to encountering poverty and forms of difference face-to-face are also moments that invite questioning and reflection on the inequalities that characterize tourism globally (Gibson, 2012, p. 59; Waitt et al., 2008). Yet, as the tourism industry and local authorities are defining and implementing plans to make Arusha’s central city areas into part of the “Eco-Tourism Capital of East Africa”, they increasingly understand these emotional encounters as inimical to the creation of its future urban tourism, thus foregrounding an economic notion of productivity.

In the 2016 National Development Plan for Tanzania, the Tanzanian Government articulates that tourism – as the leading sector in terms of foreign exchange earnings – will see investment and expansion in Arusha and Kilimanjaro regions (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2016). Three elements come together in Arusha as comparative advantages: wildlife, coastlines, beaches and a rich cultural heritage; a “young, growing, and low-cost labour force”; and rapid urbanization (Ibid., p. 22). In these regions, government will focus on a “Comprehensive Tourism and Hospitality Strategy” seeking to remedy “Capacity and knowledge gaps (including attitude, cultural)” (Ibid., p. 126). To facilitate the expansion of the tourism sector in Arusha, an international collaboration between urban development consultancy firm Surbana Jurong Pte. Ltd. and Tanzanian institutions will “re-design, modernize and sculptor the city and skylines of Arusha and Mwanza” (Quire, 2015).

This regeneration of the city must be seen in the context of the self-employed population of Arusha having “always been at loggerheads with local authorities when it comes to unplanned settlements, invasion of public areas and roads by hawkers and peddlers” (Ibid.). Various cities in Tanzania, akin to other major African cities, have since independence had troubled relations between formal spheres and public institutions and informal activities and street traders (Brown, 2015; Brown et al., 2015; Chacha, 2014; Tripp, 1997). Informal elements of any Tanzanian city are both understood as critical to the well-being of the city’s population, while also being demonized as sources of clutter, congestion, unsanitary conditions, annoyance and not contributing to the national good.
Interviews I conducted with municipal officials in Arusha and employees in tourism marketing, tour companies and tourism associations, revealed that the issue of usumbufu (annoyance, disturbance) did exercise them. One tourism marketing official became visibly frustrated as we talked about “the guys on the street”, referring specifically to how they annoyed and hassled tourists and were a part of a bigger problem of the “reputation” that Arusha as a destination relied on for its economic productivity. “Why should one-ten people ruin the reputation for a hundred thousand people in the city? Why should they ruin the reputation for Arusha, even Tanzania?” In defining the new Master Plan 2035, one town planner explained that their aim was to refurbish central streets, to create a new Heritage Precinct where the current Central Business District now is located. This would help create zones of leisure and commercial activity. Specifically, there would be renovated and developed areas for leisure and other distinct areas for informal market activities. The municipality would put up CCTV cameras on central streets and increase police presence to ensure safety and enforce hitherto ambiguously enforced street trade licensing laws. In the digitally designed map of central Arusha he showed me, he pointed to a tall, multi-storied building whose purpose was to function as a kind of African Indigenous Market (Kinyanjui, 2014) – a building where informal market activities could be drawn away from the street while maintaining vendors’ rights to market their goods. With greater security and more contained informal activities, it would also allow foreign visitors to “feel free”, as he said, in their visit to Arusha.

The Arusha Master Plan envisions street life characterized by managed rhythms, flows and social life akin to those experienced privatized, enclavic spaces (Carlisle and Jones, 2012; Edensor, 2001, 2007; Wilson and Richards, 2008). These are spaces that allow leaders and managers to attempt to curate and choreograph costumers’ experiences, to produce a sense of recognition and stability that minimizes jarring experiences and maintain comfortable ways of inhabiting them, while also urging customers to consume and experience places in formally established ways (Edensor, 2007). While central Arusha will not become a touristscape as such and likely will remain heterogenous, its imagined development moves it in this direction. Specifically, it seeks to sculpt its spaces, manage social life in those spaces to minimize disruption and help cajole visitors’ into habitual and often recognizable practices of consumption, leisure and shopping.

These projected developments amount to a form of gentrification, with an emphasis on consumption, productive capital rather than labour capital, service economy and re-classifying property as a productive unit (Billingham, 2015; Donaldson, 2018; Gotham, 2005; Janoschka et al., 2014; Smith, 2002; Tsogas, 2012). As Arusha’s city streets are imagined to be a part of a re-branding towards consumption of place, leisure, retail, festival events, urban and leisure parks, museums and heritage attractions, new ideals of sociality and experience emerge. As street sellers are increasingly perceived as causes of disruption and discomfort, they become legible to municipal, corporate and state institutions as detrimental and inimical to its envisioned landscapes. They begin to represent the wrong kind of urban citizenship. This conflict and tension has many historical precedents, as the self-employed and street sellers have at numerous junctures been constructed as the negative, dirty, unsanitary, backward or hostile element of its cities in Tanzanian and in African cities more generally (Bagachwa, 1981; Banks, 2016; Brown et al., 2010; Brown and Lyons, 2010; Cross, 2000; Di Nunzio, 2012; Sarpong and Nabubie, 2015; Thobega, 2014; Tripp, 1997). Town planners become aware of the importance of feeling “free” and of the ways in which “flycatchers” are thought to work against this ambition. Feeling “free” becomes a matter of economic growth – a growth mandated by the government. “Flycatching” becomes a matter that reroutes that growth into the informal sphere or even threatens it altogether. Building a landscape of not only serial touristspaces (Edensor, 2007) but also a zone of leisure spaces that places comfort at its heart, thus demands a reorganization of the everyday interactional and relational work that is a part of the production of those landscapes (Zelizer, 2005, 2013). This demonstrates how the
mundane and banal has particular significance for how tourists’ encounters interact with the production of landscapes (Edensor, 2007; Metro-Roland, 2011, p. 143; Pons et al., 2009) and how gentrification and urban tourism intermingle (Gotham, 2005).

What I have sought to demonstrate here is that the power given to stereotypes of street sellers to define them as sources of discomfort, paints a picture of the street sellers as people who need correcting or even eviction. Premised on minute but significant misapprehensions of how travelling experiences of discomfort emerge, simplified through stereotypes of fakeness and the “flycatcher” who “catches” and “traps” foreigners, the street sellers are discursively constructed as performing the wrong sociality, negative interactional work, causing usumbufu (disturbance, annoyance). This highlights how stereotypes used in small, often pragmatic ways by foreign visitors that allocate causality and responsibility for discomfort, become writ large upon the landscape – partly through the wide distribution networks offered by guidebooks and online forums. As they circulate, they begin to shape the perception that powerful local actors have of Arusha as a landscape and who has responsibility for whose feelings in Arusha. Once we complicate and communicate how stereotypes can work to paint complex social encounters as simplistic and linear “maps”, we can also show how they scale up, giving us a means of showing how stereotypes as “maps” become writ large and play into local struggles and power-relations.

Conclusion: landscape, encounter, travelling

This paper has demonstrated how we can think of micro-ethnographically about the notion of encounters while keeping broader social processes such as gentrification and inequality in view. Rather than taking the landscape as a static symbolic text or surface to be encountered visually, I have used the “social situation” as the dynamic moment of encounter when and where particular symbols, meanings, differences and emotions emerge. I have demonstrated how stereotypes are both used as ways of prefiguring encounters and how they are actively evoked during and after encounters to counter experiences of doubt, confusion and unwanted senses of obligation. The contribution this paper makes is to show how studying the dynamics, negotiations and uncertainties of social encounters and placing this in a broader political-economic or discursive context, is a useful way of exploring the moments that make up what this special issue is interested in: the when’s and where’s of the interrelation between landscape and travelling. Interactionist or micro-ethnographic analysis can help researchers explore social encounters as sites of insight into this interrelation.

I have suggested how these small-scale events might scale up through how meanings are made impactful as “maps”; in this case, how stereotypes as “maps” of social situations are writ large as “maps” of the social landscapes of Arusha themselves. A theoretically and ethnographically informed study of tourism encounters helps us trace when and where social processes intersect across scales. It connects everyday emotional labour to broader processes of the production of spaces through enactments of meaning, identity, boundaries and the maps through which they take effect. Because the production of urban spaces in tourism development in Arusha today relies on leisure and specific forms of comfortable experiences, so we show how shaping interactions is a part of shaping the landscape. Such an approach is forward-looking (exploring the anticipated consequences of today’s social phenomena) yet also demands that the analyst recognizes how tourism encounters are always already tied up with ideology and structures of power and inequality (though are not reducible to them) (Ateljevic et al., 2007, p. 139; Tucker, 2009, p. 447). This is an approach that responds to concerns raised by the critical part of the mosaic of tourism studies. As Gibson (2010) notes, “The danger is that with a highly nuanced description of how bodies, materials and ‘nature’ are brought together in tourism encounters, the exercise of power is relegated to background status,” (pp. 525–526).
Processes and political economies of power and inequality are not being given the attention they should (Bianchi, 2009, p. 487). A contradiction, it would seem, lies between the study of meaning and inequality, the critical turn and the cultural turn as symbolic and cultural realms of tourism have “been undertaken at the expense of any sustained analysis of the structures and relations of power associated with globalization and neo-liberal capitalism” (Ibid.). A contribution this article makes is to show how these need not be contradictory, as studies of encounters are the study of how, when and where meaning, power and landscapes intersect. The concept of “encounters” can help us see minute meanings, cumulative landscapes and large-scale processes of power in the same picture, offsetting concerns about the dilution of critical insights in tourism studies (Gibson, 2012). We avoid conflating micro with macro and level of analysis for the scale of social processes (Collins, 2004, p. 6), but are instead able to use qualitative insights to trace connections between them. A highly nuanced description of different kinds of encounters and their consequences can aid scholars, students, policymakers, tourists and local residents, in perceiving the exercise of power when and where it is exercised, by tracing their connections and trajectories in relation to broader social processes – in this case, the creation of Arusha’s tourism landscapes and urban spaces themselves.

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Further reading


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Narrated Soviet tourist landscapes during late socialism

Kristel Rattus and Anu Järs

Abstract

Purpose – The study aims to provide an insight into the inherent diversities and ambiguities of Soviet touristic landscapes during the period of late socialism by a means of Estonian biographical sources. Based on written narratives, the study focuses on the embodied ways in which Estonian travellers engaged with and experienced foreign landscapes and people during trips within the Soviet Union.

Design/methodology/approach – The study treats tourists’ travel landscapes as meaningful, lived experiences that highlight features and everyday life strategies that were characteristic of the Soviet period. Approaching via the lens of Estonian culture and nationality, the study analyses the meaningful experiences through which the narrators drew boundaries between the self and the other.

Findings – The Soviet tourism landscape of the 1960s–1980s was marked by sharp cultural contrasts. The landscapes that unfold in the narratives were full of contradictions, arousing feelings of both admiration and alienation. Whilst the ideological purpose of Soviet tourism was to build a ‘socialist nation’, the themed narratives, on the other hand, demonstrate the wide spectrum of everyday life practices, which show both the distancing of oneself from the Soviet system as well as conformation with it. Although tourism helped travellers accept the Union, this was achieved not by consenting to socialist ideology, but by becoming familiar with its heterogeneity.

Originality/value – Research on Soviet tourism has largely relied on archival sources and the press, which shed light mainly on the organisation and ideological basis of tourism. Drawing on oral sources, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of Soviet tourist landscapes.

Keywords Estonia, Soviet Union, Senses, Biographical sources, Landscapes, Late socialism

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

After the Second World War, Estonia found itself in the situation where the border to Western Europe was closed, while at the same time, the border to the East had opened. The so-called “one sixth of the world” – a commonly used expression for the Soviet Union in Soviet rhetoric – had become open for everyone to travel. Tourism within the Union became domestic tourism: every Soviet republic shared the same currency, a lingua franca in Russian, Union-wide tourist facilities, etc. Yet, the enormous territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was populated by peoples of different cultures and religions, with different standards and styles of living.

In the Soviet Union, tourism was favoured by the authorities, as it was seen as a means to implement the Soviet ideology and to design the socialist citizen both physically and mentally. The aim of tourism was to acquaint citizens with the natural resources and economic achievements of the Soviet Union, its people and the state-promoted Soviet heritage. Travelling among “brother nations” (an often-used term in the Soviet rhetoric for both the subordinated republics as well as other Eastern Bloc nations) and visiting state-sanctioned heritage sites were supposed to make one accept the entire territory of the Soviet Union as one’s homeland, evoke feelings of patriotism and pride, facilitate friendship

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between nations and make travellers realise the superiority of socialism (Gorsuch and Koenker, 2006, p. 5). Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker have characterised Soviet tourism as a cultural process of identity formation and nation-building, whereby individual citizens internalise the nation, and through this process, the nation, in turn, becomes a functioning whole (Gorsuch and Koenker, 2006, p. 10).

Tourism was managed centrally by the Central Council for Tourism and Excursions following Communist Party guidelines, with local tourist councils of the subordinated Union Republics subject to this central organisation. Both the Union-wide and local organisations implemented Soviet ideology as it related to tourism, for example, by publishing tourist guides that highlighted destinations connected to Soviet heritage (Tomingas, 2015, p. 11). Local sub-organisations dealt with practical problems, such as selling the vouchers (tuusik), that provided tourists with excursions, accommodation, catering, etc. The authorities commonly stressed that travelling in the Soviet Union was cheap and accessible to everyone, as tourism facilities were available all over the country. In fact, tourism was subject to the realities of the deficit economy, which never managed to satisfy the growing needs of the people (Koenker, 2013, p. 3), whilst tourism infrastructure (e.g. hotels, catering) was mainly available to those travelling with vouchers. Despite the restrictions of the deficit economy, people wanted to travel. From the 1960s onwards, tourism became an activity for everyone (Koenker, 2013, p. 264), as living standards improved and investment in tourism infrastructure, destinations and facilities prepared new areas to receive tourists. At that time, in addition to the purposes of restoring one’s physical and mental strength, more hedonistic goals became also acceptable, albeit reluctantly (Rotkirch, 1999; Koenker, 2013).

Based on Estonians’ narratives of travel to the preferred mass tourism destinations of the Black Sea coast, the Caucasus and Carpathian Mountains and Central Asia, the present article will provide a glimpse into Soviet tourist landscapes by focusing on the embodied ways in which travellers engaged with and experienced unfamiliar landscapes and people during their trips. More precisely, the article focuses on the 1960s to the 1980s, i.e. the period of “late socialism” (Yurchak, 2005, p. 31). The Soviet era can be divided into periods of high totalitarianism and late socialism. In Estonia, the first is broadly delineated by the years of Stalin’s rule from the end of the Second World War to the so-called Khrushchev Thaw (i.e. approximately from 1945 to 1956). This period was marked by unremitting ideological pressure from the authorities, mass repressions and comprehensive oversight of the public and private spheres aimed at gaining control over people’s personal lives. During late socialism, people adapted to the system and life normalised. At that time, official rules gradually lost their real power and started to act as declarations and rituals (Jõesalu and Köreasaar, 2011, p. 70).

The article is divided into three parts. First, the biographical sources from the collection of the Estonian National Museum will be described. In the next section, the theoretical starting points of the study that served as the basis for the treatment of tourism landscapes as personal subjective experiences will be introduced. The Analysis section focuses on the places that emerged in the themed narratives as subjectively meaningful and on the ways in which these were depicted.

Sources

The article analyses 176 written themed narratives (KV 1185–1196, 1300) based on the Estonian National Museum’s questionnaire “Tourism in the Soviet times I” (designed by the second author of the paper in 2007), which consisted of series of open-ended questions that focused on individual travel experiences. The questionnaire was intended as inspiration rather than being strictly followed. The respondents were free to decide on the content and style of their texts: they could, if they so wished, concentrate only on their preferred questions or take a completely individual approach to describing the Soviet tourism
experience. Some respondents answered all 32 questions. The texts were often in the form of a narrative rather than survey responses, ranging in length from a few, to several dozens, pages. Therefore the term “themed narrative” will be used for these texts.

The respondents included people of different ages and educations, both urban and rural. The oldest contributors were born in the 1910s, the youngest in the 1960s; however, most of the respondents were born in the 1930s. Two-thirds were women and one-third men, which also corresponds to the general gender distribution of Soviet tourists during this period. All the stories were written by Estonians in Estonian between 2008 and 2014 and are publicly available in the Estonian National Museum archive. Designed to be read primarily by museum researchers, these reviews of tourist travel are emotional and personal: they refer to memories, situations and relationships that are embedded in personal biographies and relate to the authors’ identities (Baerenholdt et al., 2004; Minca and Oakes, 2006; Rickly-Boyd, 2010), expressing thoughts and feelings that are uniquely theirs. Often, the descriptions are accompanied by moral judgements that point to personal and cultural tastes.

Written decades after the narrated events, the authors look back from the perspective of post-Soviet everyday life, when they were no longer restricted by the Soviet regime. Different mnemonic discourses can be distinguished in Estonian post-socialist memories of the Soviet era (Jõesalu and Köresaar, 2013): in the 1990s, the Soviet period is remembered primarily as a time of rupture and trauma; the discourse of the 2000s, on the other hand, emphasises the continuity of everyday experience. The sources of the article demonstrate both discourses, as some narrators still expressed animosity towards the Soviet occupation, which held “advanced and Western” Estonia back as if in the 1940s; many others, however, did not actively oppose the Soviet regime, but accepted it as an inevitability that led to specific everyday life strategies.

Theoretical points of departure: Soviet tourism landscapes

Until recently, research on Soviet tourism largely relied on archival sources, published tourist guides and the press to shed light mainly on the organisational and ideological bases of tourism (Noack, 2005; Gorsuch and Koenker, 2006; Gorsuch, 2011; Koenker, 2013; Rosenbaum, 2015). Biographical sources shed light on tourism as a meaningful, lived experience (Ingold, 2000, p. 173). Tourist experiences are treated as complex interconnections of human actors, physical environments, ideologically imposed constraints and implications, as well as social practices “interwoven with and contingent on other processes, materialities, and representations” (Pink, 2012, p. 29). Age, gender, social class and the previous life experiences of tourists and locals, regional culture-specific and Soviet norms, as well as immediate sensory perceptions, all had an effect on travel experiences (Sheller and Urry, 2004; Baerenholdt et al., 2004).

Landscapes as phenomena are created in specific social contexts and through social relationships that, while geographically located, are in constant interaction with their social, economic and cultural environment (Elkington and Gammon, 2015, p. 3). Material conditions, physical environments and social relations are understood as changing and relational; instead of being given, they are actively and variously interpreted and evaluated (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Schama, 1995; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998; Massey, 2005; Kolen and Renes, 2015) and, furthermore, reciprocally created (Ingold, 2000). Much tourism is about producing destinations materially, virtually and socially by both tourism entrepreneurs as well as tourists themselves (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p. 169; Crang, 2011, p. 205, 211). Tourist itineraries focus on pre-designed destinations that stand out for their relevance to cultural heritage, educational value or natural beauty (Haldrup, 2011, p. 66). By concentrating on relevant destinations, the itineraries overlook the insignificant “liminal” (Thomassen, 2012) or “non-places” (Augé, 1995): homogeneous sites that lack a specific identity or well-established relations to local history and environments (Augé, 1995,
However, the destinations provided by the itineraries might not be meaningful for tourists. Doreen Massey claims that it is not necessarily intrinsic qualities that make a place special, but rather the nature of its multiple relationships with the outside world that constitutes a place (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Therefore, landscapes are in the eye of the beholder (Meinig, 1979), revealing first and foremost the perceivers’ understandings of the world (Kolen and Renes, 2015, p. 24). Landscapes together with their inhabitants constitute the context onto which personal interpretations are projected (Wylie, 2013, p. 55) – interpretations that are diverse and contested and prone to produce misconception and sometimes even conflict (Sheller and Urry, 2004, p. 1).

Narrated memories, which assemble the authors’ activities, meanings and intersubjective relationships into certain discursive places, are facilitated and solidified by the sensations experienced during a trip (Rickly-Boyd, 2010, p. 269), these sensations being an important source of knowledge on their own, as they shed light on the narrators’ personal meanings and assumptions (Edensor, 2000). Sensations are culturally constructed and related to social roles, gender, class and race; when sensing something at a place, people immediately attribute subconscious meanings and evaluations to this location (Howes, 2003, p. 12). Negative reactions can be interpreted as regulators of social order and markers of cultural boundaries between the self and the other (Douglas, 1966; Irwin, 2001; Howes, 2003). Instead of being treated as mere personal responses, such feelings are seen as the backbone of cultural expression and a means of enacting society’s values (Howes, 2003, p. 12). In this way, these reactions point to cultural understanding of what is seen as acceptable and what is not.

Claudio Minca and Tim Oakes point out that any study of travel raises questions about belonging and the meaning of home, as encountering unfamiliar places inevitably entails negotiations of meaning, identity and otherness (Minca and Oakes, 2006, pp. 1–2). In what follows, we will focus on how, and through which objects, situations, attitudes and sensory experiences the narrators drew boundaries between the self and the other, while simultaneously defining who they were.

Analysis: experiences of places and people

The following analysis, based on written themed narratives, focuses firstly on descriptions of Soviet state-sanctioned heritage sites; secondly, on descriptions that stand out for their positive or negative emotional tone; and thirdly, on descriptions of contacts with locals encountered during the trip.

Sites of Soviet heritage

The authors mainly described organised trips that followed official routes. During any organised trip, whether arranged through a travel agency, workplace trade union or hobby club, tourists visited monuments that were dedicated to anchor points of the Soviet heritage narrative, e.g. the Socialist Revolution, the economic and social achievements of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Army and its victory in the Second World War, the cult of which was particularly prominent during late socialism (Tumarkin, 1994). The erection of such monuments in public space could be interpreted as a means of domination over people’s everyday lives (Lankauskas, 2006, p. 32), in addition to which representations relating to these monuments were regularly reproduced by the press, school education and propaganda. Often, such monuments were incorporated into travel routes only to make the trip reportable and eligible for funding. For some narrators, the main reason to visit these monuments was to take the picture for the travel report that was demanded by the organising institution (male, b. 1933), while the local guides’ stories, usually in Russian, were of no interest to the travellers. However, occasionally, independent tourists switched
monuments on their itinerary, too, because the official tourist literature focusing on Soviet heritage objects was the main source of information available to them.

Nevertheless, interpretations of monuments were diverse and contested, as they were interpreted both within the framework of the official heritage narrative, which often contradicted people’s autobiographical memories and cultural backgrounds as well as within personal experiences. The customary Lenin statues that were erected in almost every city were regarded indifferently as “non-places”, while, in contrast, some other monuments were of great symbolic importance, such as Red Square in Moscow. Nevertheless, seeing them in real life could be disappointing: e.g. on seeing that Red Square was much smaller than it appeared to be in television broadcasts of military parades, one viewer wondered how the rockets could fit in (male, b. 1935). Often, the monuments were not respected but ridiculed. For example, a few years after the inauguration of the Mamayev Kurgan Memorial Complex in Volgograd, opened in 1967, tourists joked about the poor quality of construction, which, in their eyes, mocked Soviet ambition and pomposity (male, b. 1933). Large and expensive monuments were also regarded as an irrational expense: e.g. one narrator pondered on how many free lunches schoolchildren could get for the money spent on a colossal Lenin museum (female, b. 1937).

Some descriptions demonstrate using the official phraseology of the Soviet regime on an autobiographical level. One respondent stated, e.g. about Mamayev Kurgan, that “in all weather, pioneers and komsomols are standing in guard from morning to evening, thus commemorating the heroic battle of their fathers” (female, b. 1928). Drawing on Portelli (1997), Tiitu Jaago and Ene Köresaar point out that in biographical sources, personal, communal and institutional layers vary, according to the point of view the story is told from (Jaago and Köresaar, 2008, pp. 19–20). In the analysed themed narratives, presumably, using Soviet official phraseology to describe Soviet heritage might not have been a conscious act. Rather, it could be interpreted as an unconscious habitual behaviour: as most of the writers’ adult lives had passed in the Soviet social space, they had adapted to using the rhetoric of the press and propaganda.

**Emotional descriptions**

As with the rest of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea beaches were the most popular tourist destinations among Estonians (Noack, 2006; Koenker, 2013) for the “exotic sensuality of the landscape, the food, and the people” (Rotkirch, 1999, p. 140). For Estonians, coming from a flat and chilly country, above all the sunny weather, warm sea and view of the snow-capped mountains were the prime targets of experience. Encountering the mountains was an experience that engulfed the whole body and all the senses. It was their scale and beauty, the strange sounds and smells, the moisture and coldness of the deep valleys, the clarity of the mountain lakes and the darkness of summer nights: “The rocks embrace us, it’s as though we are in a fairy tale. It’s completely dark” (female, b. 1900). The rocky beaches of the Black Sea were thought of differently than the sandy beaches at home and, so, people took rocks from the beaches so that they could have a piece of the South in Estonia. In addition, local fruit was an important pleasure of the South. In the Soviet Union, fresh fruit was available seasonally and in limited supply. In the South, according to memory, the choice of fruit was large, and it was juicy and cheap. “In the South”, everything was bigger and better than at home: “Next to the mountains here, the homely Suur Munamägi [Estonia’s highest peak, 317 m high] looked like a pile made by earthworms” (female, b. 1939). The greater depths and stronger waves of the Black Sea seemed, even at rest, “more menacing than our meek Gulf of Finland” (male, b. 1929). The weather, too, was more powerful than at home: “Within an hour, more water came down from the sky than I had ever seen in Estonia. Water flowed and flooded in every possible place. The pavement was like a waterfall, trees were broken, streets filled with all kinds of...
junk flowing down from the mountains” (female, b. 1932). The sensuality of the South was ambivalent, as pleasures and threats were both present. For example, sunbathing could lead to sunburn and fever (male, b. 1923; female, b. 1942), and eating exotic fruits could be followed by diarrhoea (male, b. 1933), in addition to which Black Sea beaches were often overpopulated and filthy (male, b. 1935). The mountain roads also seemed frighteningly dangerous, and this impression was exacerbated by the crosses and memorial stones erected beside them (male, b. 1928; male, b. 1933). Promotional texts never mentioned the threats of the South, and often, tourists were unable to recognise the dangers even when warned.

In addition to these threats, the narrators recalled unpleasant environments and experiences that gave rise to feelings from resentment to downright disgust. In the narratives, often, the boundary between the self and the other was marked by differences in simple daily habits, such as table manners: “I remember that we ended up sharing a dinner table with a respectable Russian gentleman, whose eating habits made my jaw drop. He pricked a frankfurter on the tip of his fork, topped it in the mustard that was in the middle of the table, and then began to bite it. For a long time, I stared at the man, then took a knife and fork and started eating like a normal person” (female, b. 1962). Heavy people riding donkeys was considered animal torture (male, b. 1932), noisy behaviour and (early) drinking were criticised in favour of restrained conduct (female, b. 1932; male, b. 1935).

Some of the criticism was targeted at people's working habits and attitudes towards living environments. When passing a village that had dried to dust on the Volga River in mid-summer, one narrator held the locals responsible for the poor state of the environment: “Landscape and life were as if there had been plague or war. There is no irrigation system, and all this nearby the abundant Volga” (female, b. 1932). Another author was astonished by the poor agricultural results in Crimea, known for fertile soil and a favourable climate. According to his judgement, lazy locals were not making full use of the potential of nature (male, b. 1935).

Among the assessments that refer to a physical distaste, hygiene-related areas, such as restaurants and toilets, stand out as they are associated with stench and filth, parasites and negligent service. There is a vivid account in which there is “a slick layer” on the floor of a public restroom where “gypsy women were moving around very comfortably – barefoot!” (female, b. 1962) or a canteen where one “could not eat at a table full of filthy plates” (female, b. 1938). One author expressed contempt: “It felt like a cowshed, but the locals considered it to be quite normal” (female, b. 1934). As well as the poor sanitary conditions, public toilets also lacked privacy. Commonly, they lacked stall doors; on some occasions, seatless toilets had been set in a row into a room without stall walls, or there were no toilets at all, only holes in the floor (male, b. 1935). According to Svetlana Boym, people using Soviet public toilets accepted the condition of complete visibility as “one was less tempted to eavesdrop and more to close one’s eyes” (Boym, 1999, p. 389); yet, as the public toilets were shockingly different from those at narrators’ homes, some authors admitted that they were not able to go to the toilet in such conditions (female, b. 1934). What facilities were used instead is not mentioned in the narratives.

In reality, stinky toilets and negligent service were not missing in the Estonian public space, nor were cockroaches and bedbugs unknown to Estonian homes. Nor do the descriptions characterise the home conditions of the people because the principles in the private sphere differed from those in the public. In portraying locals as messy, lazy and careless, the authors seem to be most annoyed by their poor attitudes towards their physical and social surroundings. Here, an interpretative framework that understands negligence, carelessness and filth as system-imposed Soviet practices not accepted by individuals could be applied. For example, Kirsi Laurén portrayed Soviet Estonia, via the cultural lens of contemporary Finns, as shabby and poor: “the disrepair of buildings and the whole cityscape of Tallinn, the lack of food supplies and commodities, the control of Big Brother, and the dominance of
the Russian language and other cultural signs appear everywhere” (Laurén, 2014, p. 1138). Yet, this was seen as the surface normality imposed by the Soviet regime, which Estonians did not accept; the Finns perceived Estonians as resigned victims of an oppressive power who had been forced to give up their culture. To the Finns, the “real” Estonian culture was still distinguishable in the background, although it was hiding in silence (Laurén, 2014). Emphasising one’s love for cleanliness and order provided narrators with an opportunity to distance themselves from the Soviet system.

**Encounters with the local residents**

Often, the narrators gained their first travel experiences outside Estonia during the period under review. As Estonian travellers’ knowledge of “brother nations” was, in many cases, poor or even non-existent, face-to-face meetings with people from other cultures gave rise to both pleasant and unpleasant surprises.

Commonly, when invited to the hosts’ homes, travellers were charmed by their hospitality, as they were usually treated with selfless care and abundant food (female, b. 1931). Especially, in the rural Caucasus, it would have been a disgrace to the community if a guest was not satisfied with everything. However, at the same time, the traditional patriarchy of the rural areas, especially in the Caucasus and Central Asia, seemed old-fashioned to Estonian tourists who were particularly astonished by the subordinate position of women and young people (male, b. 1928; male, b. 1933).

As one of the westernmost parts of the Soviet Union, Estonia was also regarded as culturally “western”. Before the Second World War and the Soviet occupation, Estonia had belonged to the more liberal part of the European cultural space (Järs, 2004). On the one hand, in the Soviet imagination, the Balts were frequently considered superior (Gorsuch, 2011, pp. 77–78), while on the other, they could not be accepted because of their closeness to the west. There were occasions when Estonians were considered foreign by locals, their appearance and strange-sounding language contributing to the impression (female, b. 1934; male, b. 1935). Estonians were well aware of their reputation and sometimes took advantage of it, for example by playing foreigners in hotels and restaurants that provided accommodation and catering for foreign tourists (male, b. 1928; male, b. 1935). Services and supplies in such hotels and restaurants were considerably better compared to those meant for locals. Apart from this, playing the foreigner also offered a temporary sense of distance from the Soviet system.

In areas far from the large cities in the European part of the Soviet Union, however, the Estonian customs frequently proved too liberal for the locals and led to misunderstanding and confrontation. The commonest cause of conflict was inappropriate clothing, e.g. Balts were often dressed too revealingly or following pop culture trends. In 1961, the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* condemned Communist Youth League members in Sochi for harassing young Estonian tourists for wearing bright sports shirts (Gorsuch, 2011, p. 66). In addition, the desire to sunbathe and swim whenever possible could lead to situations in which Estonian tourists grossly transgressed local norms. One narrator describes (male, b. 1932) how an Uzbek guide tried to prevent Estonian tourists from swimming in a desert canal:

> “From cradle to grave, women do not expose their bodies to sun or water. To the guide’s great fright, most of our group rushed into the water in scanty swimwear. There were shouts – don’t go far, don’t go left near to the bridge, don’t drown, somebody once drowned! He’s in trouble like a chicken in the middle of ducks. Tries to keep the company on the beach, by showing desert plants and animals from a book.” Supposedly, the guide’s effort was a desperate attempt to call the guests to order while remaining hospitable.

While Central Asian people usually sought to avoid contact with Estonians, some women writing about the Caucasus reported sexual harassment and even attempts of rape (female,
b. 1930). A general stereotype of Caucasian, i.e. Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani, men as violent and harassing (Rotkirch, 1999, pp. 140–141) led to situations in which Estonian women were specifically warned about them by group leaders and fellow travellers (female, b. 1932). Anna Rotkirch maintains that although liberalisation of sexual behaviour in the Soviet Union began, as in other industrialised countries, in the 1960s and 1970s, it first appeared in the larger westernmost cities with a real diversification of sexual behaviour taking place only during the 1970s and 1980s in urban areas (Rotkirch, 1999, p. 134). While between the 1960s and 1980s Estonian gender-specific standards of behaviour were considerably freer than in the Caucasus and Central Asian republics, the little-travelled Estonian tourists could assume that homogeneous standards of conduct held true across the entire Soviet Union. Decades-long membership of the USSR had led to a situation in which different Soviet republics, despite their great historical and cultural differences, shared certain collective practices and common public discourse, imposed by Soviet ideology and propaganda, a phenomenon that has also been noted in the Polish context (Horrolets, 2009). In different cultural spaces, Soviet customs were adapted to earlier traditions, among which, in addition to sexual behaviour, were also habits relating to religion and traditional trading, which illustrated how, in reality, standards of conduct varied widely across the Soviet Union. Estonians, for example, were surprised by the shoeshiners and beggars working in the streets of the Crimean cities. These people were considered “imperialist remains” (male, b. 1935), as they were uncommon in Estonia.

While Estonian travellers seldom made any further acquaintance with the people of Central Asia, contacts with Caucasians were ambivalent: even though they had the bad reputation of potential harassers, their national pride, especially the relatively wide cultural sovereignty of the Caucasian highlanders under Soviet rule, was sincerely admired: “The socialist regime there was quite different from that of Russia. There were no collective farms or other forms of collaboration or cohabitation. Centuries-old traditions of life existed, the people themselves were the owners of their homes and communities, which usually extended to the next mountain range” (male, b. 1933). The respect was mutual because tacit nonconformity towards the Soviet regime united nations. Some narrators recalled how, when their nationality became known in the Caucasus and Crimea, they were treated with unexpected attention and favour (male, b. 1932; male, b. 1933).

In Estonia and the Baltics, the biographical sources created in the 1990s and 2000s have a special meaning, as they were assumed to convey the “true memory” of the Soviet past as opposed to “false” ideological conceptions. Writing about their life experiences, the narrators used the opportunity to criticise the Soviet way of life and to “argue socially, culturally and politically” (Kõresaar, 2018, p. 4). Kõresaar, however, points out that different types of sources address different layers of the phenomenon (Kõresaar, 2018, p. 5). Themed narratives help shed light on personal meanings that add an individual dimension to public representations of tourism.

Conclusions
Starting in the 1960s, travel changed for the first time for Estonians from an elite pastime to a mass activity, fuelled by the rise in the standard of living and the state’s ideological support of tourism. The Soviet Union as a large multicultural country provided an opportunity to visit exotic places and experience diverse cultures.

Research on Soviet tourism has largely relied on archival sources and reflections in the press, written in Russian, which mainly shed light on the organisation and ideological basis of tourism. The article draws on Estonian biographical sources that communicate the varied and sometimes controversial subjective experiences of narrators, thus contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of Soviet touristic landscapes.

The narrators appreciated highly the opportunity to travel within the Soviet Union and enjoyed the diverse nature and culture: “My ‘oriental fairy tale’ is one of the few things that I have to
thank the Soviet authorities for” (female, b. 1937), remarked one respondent. However, the landscapes that the narrators traversed were full of contradictions, as the places they visited and the people they met aroused feelings of both admiration and alienation in them.

A significant ambivalence appeared in travellers’ attitudes to Soviet heritage monuments, which were important elements of the Soviet tourism landscape. In the Soviet Union, tourism was the instrument of socialist ideology. Ideally, tourist experiences were to convince travellers in the superiority of the Soviet way of life and unite people into a single Soviet nation. Tourist itineraries included numerous monuments that were dedicated to Soviet historical, economic and cultural achievements; such monuments existed all over the Soviet Union in large cities as well as in minor towns. The majority of respondents took part in organised trips that followed official routes; yet, regardless of the frequent visits to Soviet heritage monuments, these occupied a secondary place in their travel landscapes. Often, monuments were mentioned briefly and in an impersonal bureaucratic style that seems to suggest their irrelevance for the narrators. Furthermore, descriptions of the monuments, where they existed, demonstrated a diversity of personal meanings, which more often than not did not conform to ideological interpretations.

Instead, themed narratives frequently described sites that official routes did not include because memorable experiences of places and people, and context-specific feelings and actions could appear anywhere during the trip. Oftentimes, the narratives highlighted places that stood out for their messiness, such as public toilets and canteens. The respondents tended to associate the dirtiness with the negligence and irrational incompetence of the Soviet regime itself.

The Soviet tourism landscape of the 1960s–1980s was also marked by sharp cultural contrasts between the western and southern areas of the Soviet Union. Many respondents paid attention to ambivalent situations between tourists and locals. Mostly, they were comic, sometimes conflicting and were generally caused by contradictions between the liberal customs of Estonians and the traditional cultural norms of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Often, narrators expressed surprise at the local customs, suggesting that travellers were poorly informed about the cultures of other areas of the Soviet Union.

In narrated landscapes, novel and unexpected things and circumstances tend to stand out, making it more likely that exceptional and memorable events would become a “discursive place”. It was not the aesthetic, educational or other external features of a place but rather the link between the self and the outside world that made them special. Emotional and sensory experiences played an important role in remembering the journeys: by helping to conjure whole complexes of past events and environments (Lankauskas, 2006, p. 41), they provided the narrators with an opportunity to relive the bliss and horror of their travels. Strange places, people and situations engendered contradictory feelings in the narrators and forced them to draw a line between themselves and others.

Official tourist itineraries and guides represented the ideological discourse, which dominated in the media and elsewhere in the public sphere. Themed narratives, on the other hand, demonstrate the wide spectrum of everyday life practices, which show both the conscious and unconscious distancing of oneself from the Soviet system as well as conformation with it. The narratives demonstrate how the ideological purpose of tourism was not realised in the way that the authorities imagined; rather, at the individual level, members of different nationalities could consolidate in opposition to the Soviet regime. Although tourism helped travellers accept the Union, this was achieved not by consenting to socialist ideology, but by becoming familiar with its heterogeneity.

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KV 1185–1196, 1300 = Written responses to the questionnaire “Turism no ūukogude ajal I” [“Tourism in the Soviet times I”] in the Archive of Correspondents of the Estonian National Museum.
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Further reading


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Decay, dirt and backwardness: interpretations of the socialist heritage in Hungary by first and later generation Australian-Hungarians

Petra Andits

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to contrasts the ways in which first and later generation Australian-Hungarians respond to dirt and decay in the physical environment of Hungary during their journeys there. Given the growing trend of diaspora tourism, it is now more important than ever to consider tourism at the level of tourist subjectivity.

Design/methodology/approach – The material stems from multi-sited ethnographic research in two distinct periods.

Findings – In particular, the paper argues that, while the first generation relies on images internalized in the diaspora and the youngsters rely heavily on a popular Western backpacker discourse, they both share an orientalistic view of Hungary.

Originality/value – This paper aims to energize greater discussion about, and debate over, the connectivity between diasporas and tourism. In attempting to merge the two disciplines, the meta-narratives that have influenced the different generations’ perceptions are analyzed.

Keywords Orientalism, Eastern-Europe, Diaspora-tourism, Dirt, Second-generation migrants

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The aim of the article is to energize greater discussion about, and debate over, the connectivity between diasporas and tourism. Given the growing trend of diaspora tourism, it is now more important than ever to consider tourism at the level of tourist subjectivity. In attempting to merge the two disciplines, in this comparative cross-generational case-study analysis, I look at the journeys of first and later generation Australian-Hungarians to Hungary. Following Algan et al. (2010) I define first-generation immigrants as individuals who were born abroad and whose parents were also born abroad and from the same country of origin. Second-generation immigrants are individuals who are born in Australia or immigrated at a very early age and whose parents are both born abroad. In particular, I compare the ways in which they respond to dirt and decay in the physical environment of Hungary during their stays there.

Although each individual has her/his own unique travel experience in Hungary and perceives it to be uniquely personal, individual travel narratives are embedded in and influenced by a number of historically, socially and culturally founded discourses, and made sense of within the social and political frameworks provided by each context. By identifying and unpacking their reaction toward the dirt, I attempt to investigate, which
broader narrative structures underlie the accounts of their travel adventures. In particular, I compare the ways in which the older and younger generations interweave local public encounters with discourses of national belonging and various ideological positioning. While, based on the emerged data, I characterize first generation Australian-Hungarians as returnees; I refer to the younger generations as “diaspora backpackers” to indicate that their journeys are influenced by both diaspora life and contemporary youth culture.

While dirt has been a popular topic in cultural history (Stroud, 2003; Montgomery, 2012), in public health studies (Curtis, 2007), geography (Campkin and Cox, 2007; Cameron, 2010; Plummer and Tonts, 2013) and urban studies (Watt, 2007), however, in research on tourism the focus on dirt is scarce (see exception Wengel et al., 2018). In this paper, I argue that various perceptions of dirt have theoretical power not only beyond being simply their own unique stories. Following Mary Douglas (1966), I suggest considering filth as a specific cultural repertoire, which is open for appropriation and re-signification in various ways and for various purposes. Douglas (1966, p. 2) suggests that dirt and decay are not simply bodily sensations experienced in a vacuum. Rather, they acquire a potent symbolic weight that is understood in relation to hopes, expectations, and disappointments that are situated within particular nationalist imaginaries, political projects, ideological prisms and cultural topoi. Participants’ comments about sensations of filth are revelatory in relation to their positioning apropos a “sanitized West” and a “filthy communist legacy.” As I argue in the discussion, for the first generation, filth is interpreted through prisms of communism and Eastern colonization. Following a period of exile, the older generation has journeyed “home” and been confronted with challenges to its expectations and hopes of what freedom and democracy should have brought to the homeland. Filth came to be a metaphor for their disenchantment. For the younger generations, who grew up in Australia and traveled freely to Hungary, filth rather stands for quintessential Easternness and authenticity. I also look at the ways in which their different response enables the younger generation to separate off from the attitudes and experiences of their elders.

Theoretical underpinnings

At the macro level, migration and tourism are similar as both involve movement of people among geographical areas, although with different duration and intention (Li et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2018; Williams and Hall, 2000; Coles and Timothy, 2004, p. 2). At the same time, as Pelliccia (2018) notes the notion of diaspora has to do necessarily with flows of movement and forms of tourism related to the countries of origin and cultural roots, as well as concepts such as global communities (Appadurai, 1991), identity and ethnic diasporas (Shukla, 2001) and deterritorialized and nomadic mobility (Urry, 2002). Indeed, for contemporary diasporas, the longing for “home” may not necessarily be a permanent return to the homeland, but as a form of tourism. According to Coles and Timothy, diaspora tourism refers to “tourism primarily produced, consumed and experienced by diasporic communities” (2004, p. 1).

Finally, a growing number of studies have explored first generation diaspora tourism (Etemaddar et al., 2016; Iarmolenko, 2015; Iorio and Corsale, 2013; Tie et al., 2015; Harper, 2017; Laire, 2016). Diaspora’s experiences with the homeland are predominantly discussed in relation to nostalgia and an idealized remembering of the past (Agnew, 2005; Sturken, 1997). When members of the diaspora visit the homeland, experiences of disappointment are often discussed in relation to change, to the fact that things are no longer the way they have been remembered. Disappointment emerges from the disjuncture between expectations and experience. In this paper, I point to the manner in which disappointment can also be understood to result from unmet expectations in favor of the change. Returnees’ narrations of their experiences prove that it is not only inevitable transformations that may alienate them but also an absence of what they consider to be a desirable change that they encounter during later visits. In such a case, dirt and decay
stand emblematically for the persistence of the disdained past of the Communist dictatorship, which they fled and hoped never to confront again.

Ever since the 2000s research on second-generation is also becoming more prominent (Graf, 2017; Huang et al., 2016; Pelliccia, 2017, 2018; Lulle et al., 2019; Séraphin, 2019). The tourist-destination relation in second- or third-generation diaspora tourism is potentially more complex, as while diaspora members typically have emotional, familial, cultural and social ties to the particular destination they are visiting (Duval, 2004, p. 51), they may lack direct past experiences of it. They may know family stories or be familiar with cultural traditions related to the homeland but they generally have weaker links with specific locales and do not have their own individual memories from past times. At the same time, they may feel a loyalty to their parents’ homeland based on an inherited emotional attachment or sense of obligation (Huang et al., 2015, p. 2).

In this comparative analysis, I wish to provide a rigorous analysis of what exactly the relationship is between tourist activities and discourses and these diasporic return trips and by so doing contribute to the disentanglement of the theoretical relationships between the two disciplines.

Hungarians in Australia

At the time of the national census in 2016, the Australian-Hungarian diaspora comprised a multi-generational total of approximately 69,159 people claiming Hungarian ancestry and cultural heritage, of whom 19,089 were born in Hungary (ABS, 2016). The vast majority of the first generation arrived in several migratory waves during or immediately before the communist dictatorship in Hungary. Individuals in each of these immigrant waves were officially labeled “political refugees” in Australia. In Hungary during the 1950s and early 1960s, communist propaganda labeled refugees as fascist criminals, class enemies and work-shy rabble and deprived them of their Hungarian citizenship (Kunz, 1985, p. 102). After the amnesty in 1963, return visits for the “good émigrés” to Hungary were possible though not unproblematic (Borbándi, 2006, p. 273). Satzewich (2003) documents that for many émigrés the urge for freedom from communism and Soviet hegemony led to external political mobilization against Soviet domination of their homelands. Further, Eastern European immigrant groups felt that in many ways their authentic language, culture and traditions were preserved only in exile.

After decades of structural segregation and exclusion, the democratic transformation in 1989 opened up a strong discourse of belonging, inclusion and connectedness in the Hungarian-Australian diaspora (author). The same reorientation was tangible in Hungary, which implied a new official policy toward Hungarians residing outside the republic. Most significantly, the reinstatement of Hungarian citizenship enabled émigrés to move back to Hungary or engage in frequent border-crossings.

Satzewich (2003, p. 11) notes that after decades of separation, the detente between Eastern European diasporas and their homelands often had unintended and negative consequences, such as further feelings of alienation and estrangement instead of renewed connectivity. The Hungarian diaspora’s symbolic return to the nation after 1989 offered the possibility of reconciliation, reintegration and healing of the scars of the past, but at the same time, it also gave rise to new tensions. For example, émigré believed that, for Hungary to again become a “homeland,” it needed to be purged of “Eastern pollution,” transformed and restored, which did not eventuate.

Methodology

My aspiration to provide a comprehensive account of diaspora members’ experiences during their journeys to Hungary called for an in-depth qualitative study. I chose qualitative
methods of data collection, primarily participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews because of their appropriateness for understanding the dynamic and unstable nature of the phenomena being studied. My material stems from multi-sited research in two distinct periods. Between 2003 and 2007 I was involved in a broader project on Hungarian migrants in Australia. That research took place in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia. Here, I interviewed 50 first and 12 later generation Hungarian-Australians who had undertaken homeland visits to Hungary at various times after 1989. To gain a more nuanced picture on how the different travel narratives inform us about the ways in which the Hungarian diaspora in Australia has been relating to Hungary’s immediate past, the present, I found it imperative to conduct the same research also at the actual research site, namely, Hungary. During the summer months between 2011 and 2018, I conducted research in various locations in Hungary, traveling to villages and cities and staying with 28 first and later generational research participants in each place for short periods of time. Several of the participants were already familiar to me from my long-term fieldwork in the community; the rest were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. This sampling has allowed for better identification of respondents and, at the same time, for a conscious selection of individuals from which to obtain useful data and insights. Moreover, it has helped to reduce the time of the execution phase and has allowed for the removal of many obstacles in creating a climate of confidence, socialization and mutual understanding. My first inquiry related to reflections on travel memories; the second related to actual experiences, as they were unfolding for the participants.

In-depth semi-structured interviews ranging from 1 to 3.5 h enabled me to probe the complexities and ambiguities of the participants’ experiences. Having established trust with members of the Australian-Hungarian community through earlier participant observation, I was able to conduct relatively open-ended interviews with participants rather than a prescribed, formal list of set questions. The conversational interviews conducted were intended to put people at ease and thereby increase the possibility of obtaining information that may more readily indicate underlying feelings, assumptions and beliefs. All interviews were conducted face to face in Hungarian, by the author who is a native Hungarian speaker although participants sometimes shifted to English. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed and translated to English by the author.

While the interviews and extended conversations constitute the tangible substance of the fieldwork material, these are supplemented by ethnographic data, collected both in Australia and in Hungary, which provides context and enabled me to check narratives’ “weight” and soundness. Ethnography, as a subject-oriented method, bring the “native” voice and point of view into the research and, in turn, serves as a platform for building a theory that is grounded in the informants’ understandings of the context. Dense (Geertz, 1987), comprehensive and microscopic (Velasco and Dias de Rada, 1997, p. 48) ethnographic descriptions are able to interpret cultural meanings, discover the structural orders and capture the multiple meanings of social reality such as dirt. The observations in both sites focused upon the ways individuals behaved and involved noting down overheard conversations and moments of reflection. Ethnography in Hungary involved both closed-field context, where the researcher and the subjects being studied “conjointly exist within a discrete, temporal, and spatial setting as co-actors in a drama” (Seaton, 2002, p. 311), such as meals, walks and visiting friends and relatives and open-field context, where the researcher and the researched are not mutually confined within a spatial and temporal boundary (Tie and Seaton, 2013), for instance spending time at the lake side on the public beach, parties and social occasions involving more people.

Given the wealth of data generated, it is not possible to detail all observations or includes examples from every interview; thus, what follows is necessarily a selective representation of the key themes and issues. All materials were stored at secure premises at the author’s office. Pseudonyms have been used in the presentation of findings. The collected data was
coded manually. The strategy for analyzing the discussions was devised to enable the researcher to reconstruct patterns of common-sense thinking by searching for underlying themes in the generated data (Billig, 1992).

All the second- and third-generation individuals interviewed were between 18 and 27 years of age; all except two were born in Australia. The two born in Hungary migrated at a very early age (two and two and half, respectively) and have no memories of their places of birth. In total, 10 individuals belonged to the second- and 10 to the third-generation of Hungarians in Australia. All came from endogamous Hungarian families. Importantly, second- and third-generation research participants seem to show very similar observations during their trips, no significant difference could be detected.

Discussion

Dirt as a socialist remnant

Romanticized sensations of homelands are typical tropes in nationalist imaginaries. Indeed, many first-generation returnees speak of their expectations in terms of re-experiencing pleasant sights, sounds and smells, sensations that have and can only exist in the homeland. However, they rather find themselves in that impossible in-between position where desired memories are no longer retrievable, but disdained ones still linger. Neglect, dirt and decay are symptomatic examples of the latter.

What is interesting for us is that dirt and decay are not simply defined relatively but are abstracted to national and political discourses as their meaning is located in specific historical contexts. The returnee rhetoric of filth gains its power from various powerful discourses. The first is the established historical narrative on the nexus between civilization and cleanliness. Since the eighteenth century, cleanliness, more than most other traits and practices, has played a central role in the capacity of hygiene to be a signifier of civilization (Hirsch, 2015, p. 304; Schütting, 2016; Walther, 2017). While hygiene was associated with civilization and the West, the East at hand was depicted as unhygienic and uncivilized. For example, in her research on Albanians and Bulgarians working in Greece, Hantzaroula (2016) finds that narratives of Europeanization mobilized around dirt and cleanliness. Kristeva, (Bjelić, 2008) in the name of French cleanliness, French “taste” and French “cosmopolitanism” denigrates the Balkans as the filth of Europe. She divides European nations into those like France, which have an aesthetic of the public sphere, and those, such as Bulgaria, which do not. Such orientalist connotations were strengthened and multiplied after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Zarycky, 2014; Ivasiuc, 2017; Buchowski, 2006) further dramatizing conflicting “moral geographies” of post-socialist nations. This othering is performed by means of reductive categorization and entails a need to push these countries upwards on the civilizational slope (Melegh, 2006).

The returnee dynamic is no less orientalizing in its essence. It is, however, more complex than the usual “Europeanization” canons, which could be evoked by any tourist passing by in Hungary, as it is connected to other national and diasporic narratives. The importance of dirt and decay for the first-generation returnees is also rooted in the powerful narrative of an unfinished Hungarian transformation. The Hungarian transition of the 1989-1990s proceeded smoothly, without political annihilation or chaos. Economist Éva Voszka (1993) called it “the unbearable lightness of non-cathartic transition.” The state party peacefully handed over power after negotiating and accepting a compromise solution. However, pre-transition pacts and understandings between the outgoing and the incoming political elites yielded ambiguous political and socio-economic outcomes. While these initial agreements made well-crafted provisions for Hungary’s institutional transition from a one-party communist system to parliamentary democracy, priorities around such volatile matters as political justice and societal consensus on post-communist policy, especially resource allocation, were left in abeyance (Tőkés and Rudolf, 1996). Hungary’s post-communist
institutions were built on unexamined foundations whereby new and revamped political institutions could be created with the stroke of a pen. What my interlocutors would call an “unfinished transformation” is a particularly neuralgic point for the diaspora. Dirt on the streets, decay and pollution in Hungary are all seen by first generation returnees as symbols of the trauma of this partial transformation. During their visits, a great majority of older returnees complained about the irreversibility of the haunting “communist legacy” in Hungary. They concluded that Hungary and Hungarians could still not overcome the Communist tradition of improper language, littering and negligence. This inability to reject mental habits acquired under the Soviet system informs the complex of individual and societal behaviors encapsulated by the notion of the legendary *homo sovieticus* (Sztompka, 2000, 2004; Buchowski, 2006, p. 469) as my informant Endre explained:

> The garbage bins are full, people spit on the streets, dogs shit everywhere [...] it is still the old soviet primitive mentality.

For these returnees, dirt was not just seen as a sign of the incapacity of individuals to leave behind ingrained habits. Rather, it was interpreted as a sign of corruption and misuse of power above and a widespread disregard of laws and administrative rules below, creating a symbiotic whole of moral decay and diminished civic competence.

Also, radically different from the common Orientalist narratives here is the idea that dirt is an alien entity, forced on Hungary by Soviet colonization, which needs to be cleansed from the cultural body of the country (from streets, maps and language) and from social body. Elvira explains:

> This beautiful country is a tragic country. It is always under foreign occupation and cannot flourish, cannot resurrect. Look at that packed garbage bin over there. It is the Soviet legacy. Hungarians are not Balkan people, but it is very difficult to purge the country of this Soviet filth.

Importantly, in the quote above, although usually referring to different phenomena, Soviet and Balkan are used interchangeably indicating the alien, the foreign and the destructive in Hungary’s “tragic” history.

**Dirt as Eastern European authenticity**

Evidence collected demonstrates that the younger generation diaspora-backpackers have a radically different view of dirt in Hungary than their parents and grandparents. First, these youngsters’ relationship with Hungary differs greatly from that of their parents’. While the first generation has a tangible, both joyful and often traumatic experience of Hungary, from which nostalgic memories have emerged and flourished during the long years of exile, later generations spent their entire life in Australia. Although youngsters might also be emotionally connected to the country and anticipate its positive future, their emotional investment is considerably lower in the fate of Hungary. Further, while the first generation refers to the journey to Hungary as “going home,” for the later-generations the trip is to their country of ethnic origin. Even though their perception is different from that of their elders, they draw on the same or similar global and diasporic discourses when interpreting filth in Hungary.

Although it was obvious from my interviews and fieldwork that beyond a certain point and after a certain period of time, the encounter with dirt is burdensome and unpleasant for the youngsters, on superficial level dirt was nonetheless viewed in a positive fashion. Experiencing decay and dirt, in the youngsters’ narratives, was connected to several classic backpacker tropes. One of them was the importance of immersion in the mundane reality of everyday life in Hungary (Pearce and Zare, 2019; Cao, 2013; Conran, 2006; O’Regan, 2018; Maoz, 2006; Muzaini, 2006; Noy and Cohen, 2012). It seemed that abandonment and shabbiness were not only tolerated but also actively pursued. Walking
on the “dirty streets,” traveling on old and used buses and shopping at downtrodden markets were some of the ways in which diaspora youngsters tried selectively to achieve an authentic integration and at the same time disassociate themselves from those older returnees who are desperately searching for the past and not willing to keep up with the present. For instance Zsuzsi, like several others to whom I spoke, believed that such actions would bring her closer to everyday reality and provide her with the greatest sense of adventure:

I do not mind that it is shabby and dirty. This is how people live here and therefore, this is what I also want to experience.

The intimacy young people seek in this way is also essential to defining themselves as real travelers. Lozanski (2013 2010, p. 758) writes that Western travelers mark the difference between themselves and the “tourist other” through physical geographies, the chaos of cities or backwardness of rural villages being exemplars (Korpela, 2017). However, from Misi’s words below, it becomes clear that these youngsters’ positive claims about dirt not only mimic the simple backpacker-tourist hierarchical slope but also deeply rooted in their diasporic lives:

I travel on second class shitty trains on purpose. How else would I discover how real people live? Older returnees are blinded by their nostalgic lies, I think. They are incapable of accepting that Hungary is how it is now. The country doesn’t live in the past. They do! Therefore, it is impossible for them to forge meaningful connections with the locals.

Misi and others were quick to explain that, unlike older diaspora members, they looked at dirt and underdevelopment with non-judgmental eyes, as these phenomena are indeed essential parts of contemporary reality. Here it becomes obvious that while the first generation perceives dirt as an alien parasite entity on the national body of the country, brought about by a foreign colonizing power. Here, symbolically, “dirt” also stands for unethical and not true. Douglas (1966) defines it as “matter out of place,” meaning that dirt, by appearing in the wrong place disrupts a sense of order in the world. Youngsters saw dirt in a radically opposite way. For them, dirt and decay, as “routine aspects of mundane quotidian existence” (Huxley, 2004, p. 43), were perceived as a quintessentially authentic feature of Eastern Europe. Recent scholarship claims that although many independent travelers considered themselves to be more culturally responsible and sensitive than other tourists, Orientalist fantasies and tropes are deeply ingrained in the travel imagination even of backpackers (Sun and Xie, 2019; O’Reilly, 2006, p. 1004; Lozanski, 2010, p. 746; Sobocinska, 2014; Korpela, 2017). Kinga and Vera, two friends with whom I spent some time in Hungary, told me:

Kinga: You know when I arrived, I have to admit, that the full garbage bins and the dirty streets disturbed me. I was so used to that narrow, and kind of square Australian order and cleanliness. But very soon I discovered the wildness of it, I felt this place is so much more alive.

Vera: Yes, I feel the same. I feel I came to understand this place exactly because I am open-minded and did not close myself in front of unpleasant sight and sensations [...] like those Kinga mentioned Kinga: Exactly! You cant understand the place by just looking at the beauty of it. You have to go deeper.

Like backpackers in general, Kinga and Vera, along with other young diaspora members, aestheticize and exoticize filth and associate it with authenticity. Dirt and decay become images that are positioned as more truthful and realistic than the artifice of tourist sites. There is a second possible meaning, namely, the notion that poverty and hardship are more
“real” and “true” than contemporary urban middle-class culture. These young diaspora backpackers pride themselves on their sensitivity to details and claim to be penetrating genuine Hungary, while others only glimpse the superficial. Thus, although, most first generation returnees would see dirt and decay as in their faces, that same dirt and decay symbolize for their grandchildren the “unknown” side of the place, “not something people would usually seek to embrace”.

We have seen so far how dirt is connected both to mundane everyday reality in Hungary and at the same time to orientalist ideas of backwardness and Easternness. Diaspora-backpackers feel secure about their views and their contrasting attitude toward dirt becomes a locus for the expression of their belief in the superiority of their perception vis-à-vis the older generation. Interestingly, we face a situation in which, as Douglas (1966, p. 4) asserts, “pollution beliefs can be used in a dialogue of claims and counter-claims to status” becomes contrary to the original meaning. Nonetheless, when the dirt is being linked to the past socialist regime of the country, this emblematic issue seems to trigger confusion and unease in several youngsters. Most young informants respect the Australian-Hungarian narrative about the horrors of the dictatorship and even those who challenge its totality accept its basic premise. In our conversations, they all assured me that they are aware of the brutality of the dictatorship and the scars it left on the country. Still, the visual heritage of socialism, which they associated with dirty and rundown industrial cities and districts, served for many as geographic sites of authentic Hungarianness. Some of these excerpts from interviews with Adri and Thomas echo the complicated moral baggage youngsters felt when associating dirt with the past:

I know what has happened there, but I wanted to embrace the whole picture. And yes, those ugly socialists buildings are part of it. (Adri) It was crazy to think about that the country was destroyed by the regime and at the same time I really enjoyed seeing the rundown train stations and things like this (Thomas).

As I have shown in this section aestheticizing and exoticizing filth serves more than just positioning it as a truthful and realistic side of Hungary. Their different response enables the younger generation to separate off from the attitudes and experiences of their elders and claim a unique experience in Hungary.

Conclusion

By offering this comparative cross-generational case-study analysis of the perception of dirt, I have sought to demonstrate the connections between diasporas and tourism, and thus, stimulate discussion and debate around that theme. I have investigated the ways in which dirt and decay in Hungary can be refuted or celebrated, through comparisons of the tourist gaze of first and later generation Australian-Hungarians. As the discussion has demonstrated, litter on the streets of Budapest is not simply interpreted as an oversight or indicator of neglect of the local municipality but rather is extrapolated in a variety of ways: as a legacy of the socialist dictatorship that pervades Hungarian “mentality” on the one hand or a sign of contemporariness and authenticity on the other. For the first generation, experiencing dirt from year to year during their return visits further emphasizes that the abyss that was created by their emigration and which they hoped would be bridged after 1990 is still there. At the same time, embracing dirt and filth is construed as a meaningful travel practice by the younger generations, one that might enhance and enrich their experience of being Hungarian.

While their perceptions of dirt are radically different, what unites the views of the two groups is their unwillingness to accept that filth and decay, as they had witnessed in Hungary, is also a feature of Australia or broadly Western society. Instead, they can go to great lengths to differentiate the two spaces; rather than finding commonality between the Western and
the post-socialist worlds, diaspora members often emphasize difference and maintain a dichotomy between the two.

By identifying and unpacking the tropes that persist in the travel narratives of these two groups, I have attempted to demonstrate the multiplicity of broader narrative structures that underlie the accounts of their travel adventures. I have highlighted the importance of understanding the ways in which diaspora members interweave local public encounters with discourses of national belonging and ideological positioning in their perceptions of dirt. Both returnee and diaspora-backpacker comments about dirt and cleanliness offer meaningful insights into social mechanisms and highlight the importance of sensory experience in the comprehension of selfhood, culture and social relations. Thus, my participants’ comments about sensations of filth are revelatory in relation to their positioning apropos a “sanitized West” and a “filthy communist legacy”.

This article contributes to the growing literature on diaspora tourism by considering tourism at the level of tourist subjectivity. Further, comparative studies on diaspora tourism are rather rare, this one being one of the few along with few exceptions. In addition, by engaging in multi-sited ethnography, this research also succeeded to avoid the problems often faced by anthropological studies on tourism, namely, the issue of impromptu social interaction within a group of erratic compositions with unceasing extensive changeover of individuals (O’Gorman et al., 2014).

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Further reading


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Masters Highland Games and imaginations of home

James Bowness

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to explore the journeys of a group of North American Master athletes who travelled to Scotland to compete in the 2014 Masters World Championship Highland Games. Conceptualising, the Masters World Championship Highland Games as a unique form of sport heritage tourism, the paper explores how imaginations of the host venue are caught within individual and collective histories, while also being influenced by the socio-political context of contemporary Scotland.

Design/methodology/approach – After detailing the histories of the Highland games and Scottish emigration, the study draws upon a qualitative methodology to explore how such histories impact the imaginations of the Highland region.

Findings – This paper examines the journeys of athletes to the games, how they understood the games venue space and surrounding areas, and also how the Highland region itself was the site of contested meanings. The study concludes with a discussion of the narratives that frame imaginations of the Highlands and Scotland more broadly.

Originality/value – The paper adds to existing knowledge on sport heritage tourism and considers how conceptualisations of Scotland continue to be renegotiated in light of contemporary political developments.

Keywords Scotland, Sport tourism, Diaspora tourism, Highland games, Sport heritage tourism

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In 2014, the Scottish Government teamed up with Visit Scotland to produce the “year of homecoming”; a tourism strategy aimed at enticing Scotland’s diasporic population back to its home (Leith and Sim, 2014). The same year saw Scotland’s population reject Independence from the UK via referendum on 18 September 2014. Alongside such political wrangling, over 1,000 events made up the “year of homecoming”, with the Commonwealth Games and Ryder Cup standing out as premier sporting attractions (Harris and Skillen, 2016). A lesser-known event also took place that year. The Masters World Championship Highland Games brought athletes from around the world to the nation’s Highland region. A total of 169 athletes registered to compete in the event, a competition for those over 40 years of age only. The event took place in the Highland city of Inverness, a destination over three hours away from the major cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The event space was a small set of fields in the west of the city, only seven miles from the battlefield at Culloden – a site that saw the Jacobite uprising quelled in 1745 (Devine, 2011). Defeat at Culloden was a critical juncture in a century that saw many Scots migrate West (Devine, 2011). The descendants of those who had migrated had returned home to ancestral homelands to compete in the Masters World Championship Highland Games. Indeed, of 169 registered participants of the Championships, only 16 lived in Scotland; none of which were female. Instead, 112 athletes from the USA (107) and Canada (5) had travelled across the Atlantic to compete at the games in Scotland, a place of genealogical
importance. Therefore, the Masters Highland games Championship found itself in the nexus between sport tourism and heritage tourism – a synthesis that others have called sport heritage tourism. The overrepresentation of North Americans also makes the event an example of diasporic sport tourism.

As things stand, various scholars have explored experiences of heritage tourism in Scotland (Basu, 2005, 2007, 2017; Bowness, 2019; Chhabra et al., 2003; Jolliffe and Smith, 2001; Leith and Sim, 2014) and of sport heritage tourism in a range of contexts (Derom and Ramshaw, 2016; Pinson, 2014, 2017). We know less about active participation in sport-heritage tourism (Derom and Ramshaw, 2016), the involvement of diasporic populations (Joseph, 2011) and how these experiences manifest in Scotland. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to two fields of literature. Firstly, we know little about the meanings attached to sport-based heritage tourism in Scotland. This paper will therefore add to our understanding of sport-heritage tourism in Scotland. Secondly, the literature on diasporic engagement in sport-heritage tourism is confined to a few accounts, none of which touch upon Scotland. It is therefore important that we extend this knowledge considering the increased mobility provided by globalisation. The paper provides a link between existing knowledge on heritage tourism in Scotland and understandings of diasporic sport heritage tourism that are based elsewhere. To achieve such aims, this project asks the question:

Q1. What subjective meanings do North American competitors of the 2014 Masters World Championship Highland game attach to their participations?

I will first review current literature on heritage, diaspora and sport-heritage tourism, paying attention to literature based on Scotland, before detailing the histories of Scottish emigration and the globalisation of the Highland Games. After detailing the methodology of this study, three themes are presented as results. The discussion will consider how this work relates to existing literature. The paper’s central argument is that competitors frame their participation by combining narratives of Scotland’s history, personal heritage and the nation’s contemporary political landscape.

Heritage, diaspora and sport-heritage tourism

The Highland games finds itself at the nexus of heritage, diaspora and sport-heritage forms of tourism. It is, therefore, necessary to briefly comment on existing literature that spans these three interconnected fields. Marschall (2012, p. 321) defines heritage tourism as visitation to “historical sites, artefacts and cultural landscapes [that] are preserved as embodiments of collective memories and commodified to attract tourists”. Heritage tourism may link individuals to sites with meanings that link to previous generations or cultures that reside outside of one’s personal biography. Heritage tourism is therefore always nostalgia tourism (Fairley et al., 2018), but in some cases relies upon personal memories that link individual biographies/imaginations to sites (Marschall, 2015). In legitimising such links, the authenticity of heritage tourism is a recurring theme in academic literature. Timothy and Ron (2013) note that academic attention on authenticity dates to the 1960s and has more recently queried whether or not authenticity is a priority to tourists. Authenticity has also been conceptualised as objective (historically accurate) or subjective (Timothy and Ron, 2013). Indeed, the anthropological approach of Leite (2011, 2014) notes how heritage tourism often requires the creation of collective imaginaries that bring into reality collective/ethnic histories. These generative mechanisms are particularly at play within diasporic communities, a space where heritage tourism and diasporic visitation overlap.

Diaspora tourism is “tourism activity primarily produced, consumed and experienced by diasporic communities” (Coles and Timothy, 2004, p. 1). Within tourism literature, diasporic communities are often conceptualised as any group of people who identify with an ancestral homeland, a conceptualisation that differs from its original association with those who had fled via forced migrations (Brubaker, 2005). For example, Li et al. (2019, p. 1)
broadly introduce diaspora tourism as “migrants attracted to visiting their home countries” before noting that diasporic tourists differ in relation to migratory histories, levels of acculturation and on senses of place. Although the field has a holistic understanding of what constitutes a diaspora, diasporic tourism should not be understood as a homogenous practise and should instead consider the historic contexts that shaped and produced such diasporic communities.

In relation to Scottish diasporic tourism, the term “roots tourism” is used to describe the return of diasporic Scots to Scotland (Basu, 2005, 2007, 2017). Focussing on the Highlands and Islands, Basu (2017, p. 131) defines roots tourism as the “journeys by people of Scottish Highland descent (or part-Highland descent) ordinarily living [...] regions where Scots have historically settled to places associated with their ancestors in the ‘old country’”. Such diasporic tourism is often the result of genealogical research (Basu, 2007; Blain, 2014), with members of the diaspora researching family histories that reveal stories of migration. This process has become somewhat more accessible, given the widespread use of internet-based genealogical research tools. Basu (2007, p. 28) argues that not only have “technologies of globalisation” made researching family history more accessible; they have also made it easier to visit places of genealogical importance. Visiting sites of diasporic importance has been termed “return movements” (Basu, 2017) and elsewhere been associated with myths of homeland (Anwar, 1979; Safran, 1991). Often these myths impact upon how travellers understand themselves, with Blain (2014, p. 153), for example, noting the propensity for North Americans to understand themselves as “hybrid Scots” who identify as both American/Canadian and Scottish.

While research has already explored the heritage tourism of the Scots diaspora, scholarship has yet to explore how Highland sport in Scotland operates as a heritage tourism practise. The overlap of sport and heritage tourism has been referred to as the “heritage/sports tourism nexus” and has been divided into two forms (Ramshaw and Gammon, 2005). Ramshaw and Gammon’s (2005) first category, heritage of sport, focusses on tourist practises that involve a visit to a site of historic sporting importance. Their second category, sport as heritage, “has broader social, cultural and political implications” and touches on broader issues of identity (Ramshaw and Gammon, 2017, p. 116). An example of the latter comes in Ramshaw and Gammon’s (2010) exploration of visits to Twickenham stadium, with the authors arguing that the venue is symbolic of traditional notions of English identity.

Others have also explored what has been termed heritage sport events (Chappelet, 2015; Pinson, 2014); events which are associated with a landscape or place and a regularity that assures its heritage status. Pinson (2014, p. 131) notes that these events often include “differentiation strategies” that establish “authenticity in the eyes of the population”. The English Grand National horse race, held at Aintree since 1839, is one such example of a heritage sport event. Aside from spectatorship, Derom and Ramshaw (2016) explore how sport-heritage tourism may also include active participation. Their study examines event-based active participation of cyclists in the Flanders region of Belgium. Elsewhere, how diasporic populations engage in sport-heritage tourism has also been scrutinised. For example, Joseph (2011) provides an ethnographic study of cricket tourism amongst a group of Caribbean-Canadians. Her research identified a disposition towards nostalgia and re-enactment within the diasporic community. This allowed participants to:

[...] rekindle their affiliation with their national and regional cultures, discover and express a sense of self as part of Caribbean histories, and foster a deterritorialized racial community”. (Joseph, 2011, p. 146)

No research has explored diasporic event sport tourism in Scotland to see if similar re-enactments occur amongst the Scottish diaspora.

There are several reasons why the Masters World Highland games fits well within the varied forms of tourism detailed in this section. The event has taken place in Inverness three times
(2006, 2009 and 2014) and has ran alongside two “years of homecoming” (2009, 2014). These years celebrate the Scottish diaspora and the return to ancestral homelands. To further establish the event as an example of diasporic sport-heritage tourism we now much consider the histories of migration from Scotland and the creation of a globalised Highland games.

The Scottish diaspora and the Highland games

As mentioned above, diasporas are often associated with displaced people who are victims of ethnic conflict, yet it is possible to conceive of a Scottish or Celtic diaspora (Basu, 2007). The Highland clearances, one contributing factor of emigration (Bhandari, 2016), are often used to frame the resultant diaspora as one of victimised individuals. However, other processes of migration make Scotland a nation of emigration (McCrone, 2002). Scots often migrated within the former British Empire, finding a new home in Oceania, North America and the colonies (Devine, 2011). The late 1600s and early 1700s saw significant migration of Scots to the European nations of Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Belgium (Devine, 2012). Emigration across the Atlantic increased in the late 1700s, with others travelling to the southern hemisphere for economic opportunities in Australia (Fry, 2014). Within Scotland, the Highland region produced the majority of emigrants in this initial migration across the Atlantic (Devine, 2003).

Peak levels of emigration to North America occurred between the 19th and 20th centuries, with the 1920s alone witnessing 363,000 Scots emigrate to North America (Evans, 2006). At the time Scots made up around 10% of the UK population but accounted for 28% of all British and Irish immigrants to the USA and 26% of those emigrating to Canada (Devine, 2011). These migrations can be directly linked to contemporary games in North America and Oceania, yet those Scots who migrated to other European nations were often assimilated quickly into the language and culture of their new home (Leith and Sim, 2014). Therefore, European Highland games were created in contexts unrelated to Scottish emigration (Hesse, 2014).

St Andrews and Caledonian societies were set up across the British empire by Scots settlers to reproduce their ethnic identity (Sullivan, 2014). The first US-based St Andrew’s Society was created in South Carolina in 1729, an event which kick started the creation of similar societies across America (Sullivan, 2014). These associations aligned in their desire to maintain Scottish, and more specifically Highland, identity and culture. Initially, these communities were highly selective, excluding locals who did not have direct links to the old country (Fraser, 1900). Their membership processes became much more inclusive in the 20th and 21st centuries (Redmond, 1971; Sullivan, 2014). Approximately 1,200 of these US-based societies were created between 1850 and 1914 (Devine, 2011) and by 1920 around 125 US Highland games events were organised by Scots societies (Ray, 2005). This figure was to fall to around 25 per year during the 1960s, before recovering to some 230 by 2003 (Ray, 2005).

Tracing the origins of the Highland games in Scotland is difficult, as primary sources only date back to the 18th century (Jarvie, 1991). Nevertheless, the popular origin story of the games dates its inception to the 11th century (Colquhoun and Machell, 1927; Webster and Richardson, 2011). Accordingly, King Malcolm (1058-1093) organised a hill race up Craig Choinnich, outside of what is now a small town called Braemar. Two brothers battled to win the race and become the King’s messenger. The event, at the time celebrated by locals, would later become the Braemar Highland games in the 1800s. The first Highland games events were created during a period of English-led cultural marginalisation of Highlanders (Jarvie, 1991). After the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden, the British state pursued an accelerated “anglicisation” of the region (Jarvie, 1991), with the 1747 act of proscription banning the wearing of Highland dress and the communal gatherings of Highlanders. Nevertheless, the games as we know it today were first played at the Northern Meeting,
Inverness in 1788 (Jarvie, 1991). Other early Highland games that exist today, such as Braemar and Lonach, were established in 1832 and 1823.

Attendance at Highland games increased as travel to the events became more accessible (Jarvie, 1991). This process continued into the 20th century, yet how many of the cultural icons of Highland Culture became “kitsch” in a modernising Scottish society (Jarvie, 1991). Furthermore, the games underwent a process of commodification, with various events set up as profit-making enterprises (Jarvie, 1991). As other sporting events developed their spectator base, many games struggled to compete in a mediatised sporting landscape. Nevertheless, 80 Highland games took place across Scotland in 2018 (Visit Scotland, 2019), with the biggest games held at Cowal; an event which draws a crowd of approximately 20,000. Despite its synonymity with Scotland, most Highland games events take place in the USA, which consistently hosts around three times more games per annum than Scotland (Ray, 2005).

The games in North America differs to contemporary Scottish games in a variety of ways. Participation of women in North America is much more pronounced and age categorised competitive opportunities exist for Master athletes (Bowness and Zipp, 2020). Masters World Championship (MWC’s) events have occurred annually since 2001, with the US hosting the MWC’s 12 times and Scotland holding the event in 2006, 2009 and 2014. Two of these (2009, 2014) ran alongside the Scottish Government/Visit Scotland “year of homecoming” programmes – the only two years that have been devoted to diasporic tourism. The event has also been held in Germany, Canada and Iceland. The event follows the rules of North American competition (eight events adding up to overall classification), with the omission of the sheaf toss event. Age categories range from 40-45 to over 80’s. For men under 50, age categories are also split by weight, with participants divided into under/over 200lbs. The last games in Scotland were in 2014, the site of data collection in this study.

Methodology

Capturing the imaginations and understandings of the Highlands was one element of a project that examined the experiences of Masters athletes in the Highland games. Data collection began at the Masters World Championships MWC (2014) in Inverness, Scotland. This allowed a Glasgow-based researcher to collect data during the tourist activities of many of its participants. Recruitment took place on the events Facebook page and led to initial meetings with three participants. Snowball sampling was then used to produce a sample of 13 participants, 12 of whom had travelled from outside of Scotland. A further six participants were interviewed via email following the event. These too were recruited via the events Facebook page. Data collection was therefore conducted in two waves: in-person and online. Online interviews took place via email and differ from in-person interviews in that they are asynchronous in nature (King et al., 2019). As such, participants have time to consider the questions and construct answers in ways which are not possible within in-person encounters. Interviews aimed to explore the meanings that participants attached to their participation. Knowledge of individual heritage and its importance in attendance quickly became a line of inquiry. To support interview data, observations at the event and in the groups Facebook group were noted in a field diary. Promotional materials were also accessed via the Scottish Masters athletics website and the event programme.

A total of 13 men and 6 women were interviewed, producing a sample representative of the gender divide in the games (Scottish Masters, 2019). Athletes originated from the USA (16), Canada (1), England (1) and Germany (1). As such, the English and German participants (both with no heritage link to Scotland) have been omitted from this analysis. Only one participant was living in Scotland and was originally from the USA. Participants ranged between 40 and 78 years of age, with an average age of 55. Most participants were within their 40’s, which also represented the most prevalent age group in the championship
(Scottish Masters, 2019). This age category aligns to the age group that Basu (2007) suggests is most likely to engage in genealogical research. Most athletes were working full time, with only three participants in retirement. Most were college-educated and had travelled across the Atlantic, many with family members. All participants were white North Americans or Europeans.

It is observed that 12 h of audio data and 226 emails were scrutinised using a thematic analysis. Initially, transcripts were read repeatedly for familiarisation. Coding followed with no pre-defined coding framework, an approach broadly following the thematic analysis furthered by Braun et al. (2016). Themes relating to the subjective meanings surrounding participation were elicited from the data. These themes related to narratives that surround specific Scottish sites, the Highlands and Scotland’s political past and present. The following discussion will explore each of these themes.

**Meanings of Scotland**

Of 19 participants, 16 had travelled across the Atlantic ocean. Athletes came to Scotland with partners, children and in one case, a parent. The routes to Scotland from North America are not cheap. Here, Matthew (51), who had traced his surname back to roots in Ireland and Scotland, explains the cost of getting to the MWC and why he believes it is a justified expense:

> I will pay more than $2000 to compete [...] There is no financial incentive, and in fact this is a great financial disincentive, a huge disincentive. I mean I'm 4900 miles from home, I've probably flown 6000 miles to get here, you know, but for me, I'm willing to pay $2000 to be the world champion, I was the world champion last year in Albuquerque, to say I'm a world champion of the Scottish Highland Games in Scotland, that's worth two thousand dollars. (my emphasis)

The return of the games to its origin nation was of importance to Matthew. For many, travel itineraries consisted of more than just the games event. In this sense, these travels were examples of sport as heritage (Ramshaw and Gammon, 2017). Hazel (56) best exemplified the trips of many to the games. Aside from their use as transport hubs or “non-places” (Augé, 1995), the major population centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh were secondary to the Highlands and Islands:

> I wish I had more time to explore more and more, and I’ve seen quite a lot. I’ve been over in the Isle of Skye, so it’s mainly been over in the West [Highlands], but there are so many things I want to see in the east side too. But I know I’m not gonna have the time, so I’m just going to have to make another trip ha.

Have you seen any of the cities such as Glasgow or Edinburgh?

> Err we flew into Glasgow, but we didn’t get to see any of it no. We didn’t really see anything because we had to drive up here, but I’ve been over into Skye, and up the peninsulas, I’m trying to think of others, we’ve been trying to see things around the area where they aren’t necessarily cities, but I want to catch Stirling on our way back.

Hazel’s itinerary focussed on areas of natural beauty and spaces of personal heritage. She had traced her family history to the three clans of Macdonald, Ross and Boyd. Having joined the Ross society, Hazel placed importance on wearing the Ross clan tartan while she competed. Exploring family heritage was common across participants and was also facilitated by education events that also joined the year of homecoming tourist strategy. For example, during the games event, the “Highland Clans Exhibition” also took place in Inverness and helped participants with their family histories (MWC, 2014, p. 17). The importance of clan history was adjoined to the importance of place, with specific areas relating to family histories. For example, Edward (75) details the importance of Inverness as a place:
We really care about Scottish culture and being removed from it. I guess when you are born, and it’s all around you, you tend to take it for granted, where we are over there like for all the people who come over except for a few of us, Inverness was just a storybook place they had read about and it was on the to-do list, something we got to go to someday. This event caused them to move it up to the front of the list, they started raising money to come.

For those with diasporic links to Scotland, the event locale was of importance. Personal family histories also linked to imaginations of what the Highlands were about.

The imagined Highlands

Imaginations of the Highlands were often located within a version of Highland history. Some participants knew precisely when their ancestors had travelled across the Atlantic, as well as where they settled in North America. A narrative of economic opportunity was often used to explain these migrations, yet others took a different stance. For example, Edward (75) appeared to conflate the contested history of the Clearances by mobilising both opportunistic and enforced narratives of migration:

Right, right. Like I say, if there would have been the opportunity, economic opportunity to stay in Scotland, they would have never left. You know like I say the amount of people who were killed by England when they had the last clan uprising in 1745, they tried to wipe out the Highlands

In bringing in Scottish and UK history from the 20th century, Edward presented a narrative of Highland oppression and victimisation. Later in our interview, Edward discussed the “class system” which allowed British nobility to use “everybody else” as military sacrifices. Nevertheless, his account also acknowledged the limited economic opportunity that Highlanders faced at the time. This narrative of victimhood and oppression was also used to explain why very few Scottish athletes attended the MWC:

If they had stayed and raised their families here, their kids would have been doing this stuff now [...] The United States was the same way, the United States, the Scots and the Irish who went over, went over as indentured servants, which is a polite way of saying a slave, and so, the ones who lived, like a third of them died on the boat going over, the ones that lived, they had kids and everything like that and the very first thing they wanted was their kids to be Americans, so they discouraged speaking in native tongue and stuff. Our ancestors wanted to, they were in a new world with new things happening they wanted everyone to speak the language and become part of the culture. But still, they were proud of their heritage.

Edward’s understanding of processes of migration does not align with academic accounts of what Scots did when they entered North America. Indeed, as Devine (2011) points out, 1,200 Caledonian Societies were set up to sustain Highland culture, with the continuation of the Gaelic language a vital mission of these societies (Sullivan, 2014). There were other examples of participants drawing upon myths of the Highland space and people. These often reproduced familiar tropes of Scotland, with Glen and Edward both presenting such examples:

Err last time we were back in Scotland we were at the family museum and they actually pulled out the clan nards, which are the rocks, out of the draw and they didn’t realise I was an athlete, probably because of my size, and then when I put my hand on the rock, they were like ‘och aye you must be an athlete’ (in a Scottish accent) – so I said what makes you say that? And he said ‘you’ve just put your hand where the family has for the last few hundred years and then as we’re leaving, he’s like are you forgetting something – kilt, wallet, passport – nooo. He said we have no athletes in the land that we are aware of, we would be honoured if you took them back with you and, so here we are two rocks rolling around in the boot of the car for the two weeks (Glen, 47)

And like I say, I tell everybody err Scotland is not a place it’s a feeling of the heart, you know you might be 5000 miles away from it but the feeling is still there, and like I say to people who wanted to come to Inverness to walk down the River Ness and you know hopefully see Nessy [mythical
animal living in Loch Ness] you know it’s a dream they’ve had all their lives since they were little. (Edward, 75)

Glen’s understanding of the event with the rock narrates the idea of a physical disposition created in the past and propagated throughout generations, furthering myths of an embodied homeland. Edward also drew upon myths of the past. However, some of his understanding of Highland cultural history demonstrated an awareness of how many Scots icons are inventions of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). For example, Edward discusses the phenomenon of piping, an activity which he also participated in during his travel to Scotland:

Yes, well a lot of people think that the bagpipes are a Scottish thing. But it originated in the mid-east, Egypt and Pakistan that area. […] when Rome went bankrupt and had to send the troops home, they just dumped them because all they took back was stuff to fight with […], and the Irish picked them up and started playing them and they took them over to Ireland because there wasn’t really any towns or anything or population or anything in Scotland […]. And err of course err the English nobility they tried to wipe it out, and they made it illegal punishment by death to play the pipes. By 1703 they had killed every piper in Ireland, they tried in Scotland […] finally gave up on it and repealed the law.

Again, Edward’s understanding of the history of the Highlands was one of victimisation from the British state. This idea was articulated at a time when similar narratives were presented within the Scottish 2014 independence referendum.

Scotland and politics in 2014

Myths of previous generations were adjoined by a consideration of Scotland’s contemporary place in the UK. Indeed, narratives of victimisation couched in Scotland’s distant history were mobilised through the formulation of opinions relating to the 2014 independence referendum. Glen was so attuned to the politics of Scotland that he could easily differentiate between Scottish separatism that was anti-English and one which was more civic in outlook. Here he explains his opinions on the political situation:

I’ve been following the referendum that has been going on, and I was telling them that you know me well enough to know that I’m not anti-English, I’ll admit that some people who want their freedom are anti(English). Scotland has been free, but they are not independent. I have to say that if I were anti-anything, then it would be the politics, anti-Westminster which a lot of people are saying. On our way over we had a little stopover with a gentleman from the Hebrides. He goes ‘well I am in the NO camp’ so I said explain why? So, he goes ‘what if Minnesota or Massachusetts broke away’ and I said, ‘it’s different’. That would be like if the US took over Canada and we dictated to them everything.

Glen’s comparison to the USA and Canada equates Scotland and England as national states, rather than nations within the state of the UK. Furthermore, his later comments solidified his belief in Scotland as a coherent group of people, with a shared culture and value system:

[…] one thing I’ve really noticed throughout history and people I met I’ve had people say it seems like anyone who is of Celtic heritage especially a Scot they hate to see injustices they almost seek out injustices and try and make them right and a lot of guys in the military are that way, and you start talking to them and they are like yeh my grandma was Scottish or my grandfather was Scottish. Then they start thinking about it and they’re like ok, like I say there is something about the blood, it’s like a cultural connection.

While the 2014 year of homecoming was ostensibly apolitical, in that it avoided questions of independence, it sought to stimulate a “homing desire” (Brah, 1996) within those who had learnt a history of Scotland which presented a story of English led political subjugation. Tales of Scottish oppression through the clearances ran alongside an understanding of
Scottish independence as an attempt to overcome a democratic deficit perpetuated by Westminster (Keating, 2017).

Discussion and conclusion
This paper has explored the experiences of North Americans who travelled across the Atlantic to compete in the 2014 Masters Highland games. It has provided a case study of those who engage in an example of sport as heritage, whereby the visitation of diasporic Scots to the Highland region of the nation becomes enmeshed in identities, personal histories and imaginations that extend well beyond the site of an historic sporting moment (Ramshaw and Gammon, 2017). The argument forwarded here is that the Masters Highland games is a form of sport and heritage tourism that relies upon imaginations of the Highland region. As in Joseph’s (2011) work on cricket, this form of tourism allows members of the Scottish diaspora to re-enact and perform an ethnic/national identity. The chance to actively participate in “traditional” practises in their origin venue is also akin to Derom and Ramshaw’s (2016) study of cycling in Belgian. Here participation extends beyond spectatorship and turned the event space into a site for the performance of national identity (Edensor, 2002). This study has demonstrated the narratives that surround such re-enactments and the role they play in driving such forms of tourism. Narratives of Scotland, the Highland landscape, migration, and interactions with the British state all provided a discursive backdrop to participation.

The history of Scottish migration, and particularly the clearances of 1790-1860, is one of contestation (Gouriévidis, 2016), yet for a few participants, a narrative of victimisation was dominant. This contested history is split between those who argue that the clearances were the result of economic factors and those who frame the resultant migration as a response to oppression from the British state (Basu, 2007). As such, one person’s site of opportunistic departure to the new world is another’s site of ancestral victimhood. Some participants mobilised a narrative that meant the games location became a site of historic victimisation and injustice. As such, the event had a level of spatial authenticity that would be absent from Highland games events held elsewhere around the world. Authenticity here can be understood as both objective and subjective (Timothy and Ron, 2013). The objective in that the histories of the sport and Inverness are well evidenced, yet subjective that the meanings associated with such space are within the eye of the beholder and reliant upon individual understandings of the past/present. This spatial authenticity was also encouraged by the Scottish Government and Visit Scotland’s “year of homecoming”. As such, this finding touches on what Leite and Graburn (2009, p. 45) refer to as the “politics of heritage”, that is, who gets to control and reproduce narratives of the past in contemporary tourism. Given that the economic impact of Homecoming 2014 amounted to £136m (BBC, 2015), the state-sponsored reproduction of narratives of Scotland’s past are interlocked with the economic imperatives of its tourist industry.

Romantic notions of Scotland overall are also entangled in contemporary politics and culture, with 2014’s Scottish Independence referendum complicating further the landscape of participation. I argue that this is embedded in Scottish exceptionalism that locates Scotland and its people as a dislocated sub-state nation that continues to be dictated to by an England dominated British state (Law, 2017). Such a conception of Scottish exceptionalism perpetuates a narrative of Scots as subjugated within the Union; a notion which impacts upon imaginations of the Highland space. This is even more complicated by the 2016 Brexit election which saw a majority of Scots vote to remain part of the EU. This political development adds further to symbolic boundaries (Fenton and Mann, 2019) that separate Scotland from England. As such, the political unfolding of Brexit may simply have further embedded notions of Scottish exceptionalism that were prevalent here.

While elements discussed here are present elsewhere, this is the first account of how a sporting space can be the site of such imaginations. This research builds upon existing
work that explores heritage tourism within Scotland (Basu, 2007, 2017), sport-heritage tourism (Ramshaw and Gammon, 2005) and tourism with diasporic connections (Joseph, 2011). Indeed, this paper is the first exploration of the narrative context that surrounds the participation of diasporic populations in sport heritage tourism within Scotland. Elsewhere, tourist trips to North American Highland games events have been examined (Chhabra et al., 2003), as well as forms of Scottish football fandom in North America (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2006), yet the phenomenon of North American diasporic populations returning to actively participate in sport has not been examined. In contrast to Chhabra et al. (2003), this paper demonstrates the importance of spatial authenticity, that is, the role that origin venues in the minds of many participants. As such, this paper has furthered our understanding of why diasporic populations engage in sport-heritage tourism in Scotland.

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Asian solo male travelling mobilities – an autoethnography

Aaron Tham

Abstract
Purpose – This study aims to unpack the notion of travelling mobilities from the perspectives of an Asian solo traveller using the context of the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan.
Design/methodology/approach – An autoethnography was used for this research, analysing reflective notes drafted on hand-written journals over the duration of six days over three host cities of the sporting event.
Findings – Asian solo men appear to be treated very differently from their Western counterparts and solo female tourists. In addition, engaging with a sport that is highly Western-centric exposes the liminal spaces of in-between. Being of Asian appearance and conversant in Japanese further blurred the travelling mobilities of being an unlikely sports fan, an impromptu translator, a presumed local resident and an unconventional wanderer.
Originality/value – These limitations notwithstanding, the research has contributed to the paucity of knowledge surrounding Asian solo male tourists and some aspects of their corresponding travelling mobilities. Such nuanced understanding then inform tourism and hospitality knowledge and practice of offering relevant experiences to such a market.
Keywords Japan; Rugby world cup (2019); Single traveller
Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Solo tourists have received considerable academic and industry attention (Abbasian, 2019; Bianchi, 2016; Dennis, 2018; Elliott, 2018; Karantzavelou, 2018; Lisella, 2019; Webster, 2018). According to numerous industry reports, solo tourists have increased by almost 50% since 2015, with this increasing trend likely to grow into the future (Elliott, 2018; Karantzavelou, 2018; Lisella, 2019; Webster, 2018). In this research, solo tourists will be consistently adopted as compared to another term used interchangeably – single travellers, which could be mistaken for travellers who are not married. As such, solo tourists refer to those travelling individually for a variety of purposes and motivations related to tourism (Jordan, 2008). It is acknowledged that there are several forms of solo travel, which can range from backpacking, adventure tourism, the business events sector, religious pilgrimages and voluntourists.

Amidst this backdrop, very little remains known about solo tourists and their travelling mobilities over the course of their experiences (Te Brommelstroet et al., 2017). If we accept tourism as the movement of tourists away from their home to destinations for the purposes of tourism-related experiences, then by extension, tourism incorporates temporal and spatial mobilities (Coles, 2014). In this space, several scholars have attempted to conceptualise tourism mobilities to reflect the fluidity of tourist dispersions. For instance, Gibson (2006) argued that mobilities may be triggered through cinematic gazes, where the exposure to media has a (sub)conscious, but powerful effect to stimulate imagery and induce tourism intentions. It is essential at this juncture to highlight the relation between

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tourism mobilities and the tourist “gaze”, as coined by Urry (1990). According to Urry (1990), the tourist gaze was a mechanism to understand the phenomena of tourist experiences based on what was being observed, the effects of these encounters between locals and tourists and the corresponding effect this has upon the tourist. This conceptualisation embodies the highly sensory nature of tourism and draws upon one’s cognitive, emotive and conative responses according to the context of the tourist mobility. Then, globalisation brought what was consider the Tourist Gaze 2.0, where mobilities afforded a greater number of individuals to undertake tourist experiences (Urry, 2002). Following this, Urry and Larsen (2011) developed the Tourist Gaze 3.0 to reflect the role of photography as an additional facet of technology-mediated mobilities. This view of technology-enhanced mobilities allows for the co-creation of tourist experiences, which elucidates a more nuanced understanding of the emerging body of knowledge (Gretzel and Jamal, 2009). Hannam et al. (2014) postulated that tourism mobilities are shaped by tourist experiences and are also informed by external events, including a fast-evolving mobile landscape. Indeed, the contributions of these scholars show how tourism mobilities operate in networks, rather than a linear input-output model of tourism consumption (Asero et al., 2016). Despite the inherent strengths of extant studies, Franquesa (2011) postulated that this shift in stance of a “mobility turn” remains inadequately positioned to (re)present the nomenclature of tourism mobilities. In addition, Hall (2014) concedes that tourism mobility dialogues have largely been dominated by Anglo-Saxon discourses in North America and Europe.

However, interest in solo travel within Asia, as well as the rise in solo travellers originating from Asia have continued to pique industry interest (Martin, 2018). Kim (2017) attributed this to the rise in the middle-income population of Asian countries and their increasing propensity to use tourism as a tool for self-discovery. This led Chen and Chang (2015) to emphasise the need for greater scope of tourism mobilities from emerging world regions such as the Asia Pacific. The shifting landscape of tourism mobilities towards an Asia Pacific orientation is echoed by Cohen and Cohen (2015). They postulated that the notion of mobilities needs to be further clarified as Asia is fast becoming the centre of tourism economies. Yet, Cohen and Cohen (2015) also concede that there is a dearth of knowledge pertaining to emic perspectives of such tourism mobility landscapes. Emic perspectives reveal the lived experiences from persons or groups uncovering their own stories and narratives about a phenomenon and provide rich insights as to their own perceptions and experiences (Jackson and Niblo, 2003; Maoz and Bekerman, 2010). Chang (2015) pointed to the heterogenous nature of Asian tourists as the rise of the middle-income earners, coupled with the ease of travel between countries and technological advancement, means that tourism mobilities of and about the region can no longer be ignored. Indeed, King (2015) proposed that the tourism mobility landscape in Asia should be characterised by the encounters, and therefore be embedded in terms of interactions with a given context.

There has been an emerging body of knowledge elucidating a more nuanced understanding of varying forms of tourism mobilities as enacted within the region. For instance, the global shift in labour mobilities for work and employment has triggered a stream of work around migration-induced tourism mobilities (Bui and Wilkins, 2016; Bui et al., 2018). Wang et al. (2020) focussed on a longitudinal perspective of tourism mobilities in China, demonstrating the shift in consumer behaviour form being shepherded around in group tours, to growing in confidence and exploring the world as free independent travellers and other forms. This is accompanied by a meteoric rise in mobile applications (also known as “apps”) that help such individuals to personalise travel arrangements and disseminate contents in their native language such as We Chat and Mafengwo (Lu et al., 2015; Ma et al., 2020; Shi et al., 2020). This new found confidence has led to the development of one such niche termed “lifestyle mobilities”, where these individuals draw on their unique skills and attributes for value creation to generate a livelihood while being nomads in moving from one destination to another (Sun and Xu, 2017; Xu and Wu, 2016;
Evidently, tourism mobilities from an Asia Pacific perspective have become more sophisticated. Indeed, such tourist flows have gone beyond pure hedonic pursuits, and therefore shifting academic cases of humans as objects being studied to a mobilities paradigm that embodies heightened cultural complexities when adopting emic perspectives (Ooi, 2019).

The focus of this research is on unpacking mobilities from the perspectives of Asian solo travellers in the context of the Rugby World Cup (2019) hosted in Japan adopting autoethnography as a method of choice. In acknowledging that there are other mega-events that could be used to answer the research questions of interest, this event offers a unique perspective to explore solo male tourism mobilities from an Asian context as it is the first time that a major rugby union competition is held in the continent. In academic literature to date, there is a paucity of knowledge surrounding tourism mobilities of solo tourists and even less within the realm of Asian men and sports-related travel from the perspectives of one’s own experiences. Autoethnography offers such opportunities and unpacks the socio-cultural identities and personal meanings associated with a wider phenomenon (Dashper, 2015). As such, this research seeks to contribute theoretical outcomes and inform managerial practices related to tourism mobilities associated with an Asian solo male perspective in the context of a mega sporting event.

Following the introduction, the rest of the paper is structured as follows. A scan of recent literature surrounding solo tourists is provided to highlight the current body of knowledge in this topic. Guided by such knowledge (or the lack thereof), a synthesis of the theoretical gaps is provided, deriving research questions to be addressed by this project in Section 2. Section 3 mentions the context under investigation. Subsequently, the use of autoethnography as a methodology of choice is explained in Section 4. Then, the findings are presented and discussed in Section 5. Finally, the research concludes with the contributions of the research, its limitations and avenues for future investigation in Section 6.

2. Literature review

In the investigation of solo tourists to city destinations in Sweden, Abbasian (2019) found that the autonomy of deciding where, when and how to travel derived greater satisfaction from their experiences. Bianchi (2016) attributed this high level of satisfaction to the need for heightened levels of involvement in solo travel planning, arguing that it is more likely that customisation of itineraries increases one’s attachment to the trip.

There is also an emerging body of work surrounding solo female tourism. Table 1 presents a summary of literature on solo female tourists, highlighting the growing interest and demand for solo women travelling abroad. From Table 1, some key themes have emerged. First, solo female travel is often triggered by a combination of push and pull motivations, including journeys of self-discovery and the ease of travel planning without having to consider others’ interests. Second, solo women encounter a range of risks, sometime attributed to stereotypes or otherwise perceived as vulnerable victims. Nevertheless, most solo female tourists have demonstrated their willingness to undertake similar trips in the future, as it increases their self-confidence and allows them to explore new horizons. In addition, Table 1 evidently demonstrates interviews as the preferred method when investigating solo female tourists, with 11 out of the 14 papers used this method to uncover solo female travel experiences (and their associated risks). There remains an absence of emic perspectives from using other methods such as autoethnography, to provide a more balanced perspective of these experiences. This is somewhat surprising, considering that autoethnography can liberate solo women voices across a myriad of experiences in tourism [Erdely (2018), Marschall (2015), Roelofsen (2018) and outside of tourism (inter alia Olson (2004), Zenovich (2016))].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s) (year)</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obenour (2005)</td>
<td>27 backpackers in hostels</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Solo travel as a mechanism to overcome constraints and venture to the unknown&lt;br&gt;Solo travel as a marker of independence and discovery&lt;br&gt;Travel constraints impose challenges and influence the types of experiences had on these journeys&lt;br&gt;Constraints were classified into four types – sociocultural, personal, practical and spatial&lt;br&gt;Constraints could occur before or during the travel experience&lt;br&gt;Independent travel undertaken to fulfill personal or professional development&lt;br&gt;Solo tourism experiences allow for a reflection and resetting of purposes and priorities to be used back in their everyday lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson and Little (2005)</td>
<td>40 Australian women travelling solo</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Solo women were cognisant of themselves being objects of a sexualised gaze&lt;br&gt;The interactions with locals increased a sense of vulnerability&lt;br&gt;Sexual overtures ranged from implicit to highly explicit&lt;br&gt;Not all of the women resisted these advances from local men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson and Harris (2006)</td>
<td>40 Australian solo female tourists and a separate study of female solo business travellers</td>
<td>Interviews and focus groups</td>
<td>Travel fears associated to perceived images, sense of vulnerability to the unknown environment, lack of access to some tourism experiences and also being easily identified contributed to the understanding of women's fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan and Aitchison (2008)</td>
<td>39 solo female tourists</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Solo travel opened up spaces of harassment&lt;br&gt;Solo female travellers are further expected to adhere to local cultures and norms, especially in a patriarchal society&lt;br&gt;Solo travel undertaken to challenge one's abilities&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was driven by the motives of self-discovery and meeting new people&lt;br&gt;Solo travel offered flexibility and discretionary choices to meet individual needs&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was often undertaken to escape one's home environment&lt;br&gt;Solo travel required individuals to draw on personal strengths to overcome challenges&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to confront fears and risks that could arise during the journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>McNamara and Prideaux (2010)</td>
<td>228 solo travellers to Tropical North Queensland, Australia</td>
<td>Surveys at airports</td>
<td>Solo travel was a path towards self-discovery&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to overcome negative stereotypes associated with being Asian women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brown and Osman (2017)</td>
<td>4 British white women travelling solo to Egypt</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Solo travel opened up spaces of harassment&lt;br&gt;Solo female travellers are further expected to adhere to local cultures and norms, especially in a patriarchal society&lt;br&gt;Solo travel undertaken to challenge one's abilities&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was driven by the motives of self-discovery and meeting new people&lt;br&gt;Solo travel offered flexibility and discretionary choices to meet individual needs&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was often undertaken to escape one's home environment&lt;br&gt;Solo travel required individuals to draw on personal strengths to overcome challenges&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to confront fears and risks that could arise during the journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pereira and Silva (2018)</td>
<td>Conceptual paper</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Solo travel was a path towards self-discovery&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to overcome negative stereotypes associated with being Asian women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seow and Brown (2018)</td>
<td>10 Asian solo women visiting the UK</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Solo travel opened up spaces of harassment&lt;br&gt;Solo female travellers are further expected to adhere to local cultures and norms, especially in a patriarchal society&lt;br&gt;Solo travel undertaken to challenge one's abilities&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was driven by the motives of self-discovery and meeting new people&lt;br&gt;Solo travel offered flexibility and discretionary choices to meet individual needs&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was often undertaken to escape one's home environment&lt;br&gt;Solo travel required individuals to draw on personal strengths to overcome challenges&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to confront fears and risks that could arise during the journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yang et al. (2018a, 2018b)</td>
<td>35 Asian solo tourists</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Solo travel opened up spaces of harassment&lt;br&gt;Solo female travellers are further expected to adhere to local cultures and norms, especially in a patriarchal society&lt;br&gt;Solo travel undertaken to challenge one's abilities&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was driven by the motives of self-discovery and meeting new people&lt;br&gt;Solo travel offered flexibility and discretionary choices to meet individual needs&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was often undertaken to escape one's home environment&lt;br&gt;Solo travel required individuals to draw on personal strengths to overcome challenges&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to confront fears and risks that could arise during the journey</td>
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<td>Thomas and Mura (2019)</td>
<td>21 Western female solo tourists to India</td>
<td>Blog content analysis</td>
<td>Solo travel opened up spaces of harassment&lt;br&gt;Solo female travellers are further expected to adhere to local cultures and norms, especially in a patriarchal society&lt;br&gt;Solo travel undertaken to challenge one's abilities&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was driven by the motives of self-discovery and meeting new people&lt;br&gt;Solo travel offered flexibility and discretionary choices to meet individual needs&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was often undertaken to escape one's home environment&lt;br&gt;Solo travel required individuals to draw on personal strengths to overcome challenges&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to confront fears and risks that could arise during the journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Osman, Brown and Phung (2020)</td>
<td>10 Vietnamese female students in the UK</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Solo travel opened up spaces of harassment&lt;br&gt;Solo female travellers are further expected to adhere to local cultures and norms, especially in a patriarchal society&lt;br&gt;Solo travel undertaken to challenge one's abilities&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was driven by the motives of self-discovery and meeting new people&lt;br&gt;Solo travel offered flexibility and discretionary choices to meet individual needs&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was often undertaken to escape one's home environment&lt;br&gt;Solo travel required individuals to draw on personal strengths to overcome challenges&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to confront fears and risks that could arise during the journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wantano and McKercher (2020)</td>
<td>16 Asian solo women backpackers</td>
<td>Interviews and focus groups</td>
<td>Solo travel opened up spaces of harassment&lt;br&gt;Solo female travellers are further expected to adhere to local cultures and norms, especially in a patriarchal society&lt;br&gt;Solo travel undertaken to challenge one's abilities&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was driven by the motives of self-discovery and meeting new people&lt;br&gt;Solo travel offered flexibility and discretionary choices to meet individual needs&lt;br&gt;Solo travel was often undertaken to escape one's home environment&lt;br&gt;Solo travel required individuals to draw on personal strengths to overcome challenges&lt;br&gt;Solo travel needed to confront fears and risks that could arise during the journey</td>
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Despite the emerging body of literature surrounding solo female tourists, there remains very implicit knowledge associated with solo male tourists. In this space, some studies attempt to reveal minor aspects of what remains an under-studied market segment. For instance, Vorobjovas–Pinta (2018) and Leurs and Hardy (2019) found that solo travel was initiated by the possibility of forming relationships when meeting up in gay resorts or over Tinder dates, respectively. The circumstances surrounding solo female tourists may also be similarly located within male tourists, where the transformative role of solo tourism experiences also occurs, as argued by Pung et al. (2020).

Relevant to this research are solo male tourism experiences embedded in dining and hospitality. Studies investigating gendered roles of solo dining have also reported that there is gender-based inherent bias between male and female solo diners. For instance, Lahad and May (2017) found that solo female diners perceived heightened levels of harassment as compared to their male counterparts. Likewise, certain dining contexts such as pubs, were more accessible to solo men than women because of seemingly more masculine environments that featured alcohol, music genres and seating arrangements (Goode, 2018).

Nonetheless, most studies devoted to the understanding of solo male tourists are heavily skewed towards a Western orientation, with very little uncovered from an Asian perspective. Pritchard and Morgan (2000) argued that this is because of a privileged landscape, where it is often the case of solo men undertaking tourism activities, which Coston and Kimmel (2012) call a “performance of masculinity”. This is evident across a range of tourism activities such as cycling tourism (Buning and Gibson, 2016), motorcycling (Frash et al., 2018) and sex tourism (Bishop and Limmer, 2018). Each of these genres tends to characterise the Western male as an individual of power, resource and are, therefore, accorded (un)conscious masculinity, although the presence of solo women in some of these spaces is slowly emerging (Doran, 2016; Martin et al., 2006; Weichselbaumer, 2012).

However, very little else is known about solo male tourism experiences from within an Asian perspective, despite increasing numbers from the continent. As such, this research seeks to unearth further insights to this understudied market.

The term Asian tourist has been approached in a variety of ways. Chen (2011) adopted a geographical stance to define Asian tourists as those that originate from the geographical parameters of Asia Pacific landscape. In contrast, Pyo (1996) categorised these tourists as those who identify themselves as possessing Asian cultures and values. These cultural differences further highlight the heterogeneity of Asian tourists in terms of their identities as exemplified by their behaviour at a destination, including food habits, shopping consumption patterns and interactions with locals at a destination (Reisinger and Turner, 2002). This research aligns with this definition of Asian tourists as a more inclusive stance, recognising that Asian tourism mobilities should be given greater emphasis as a new tourism paradigm, as postulated in other studies (Trupp and Dolezal, 2013; Winter, 2009). This distinction between Asian and non-Asian tourists is necessary, as the markets have demonstrated different patterns of tourism behaviour shaped by their cultural norms and values (Choi and Chu, 2000; Kohsaka et al., 2015; Ngai et al., 2007; Paris et al., 2015).

TTG Asia (2019) reported that intra-Asia tourism accounted for almost 63% of visitor arrivals into the region. This can be attributed to a range of factors. One, countries in Asia often share close historical and heritage roots that increase the familiarity between host and guests, thereby inducing destination visitation (Ramos et al., 2017). Two, the rise of low-cost carriers such as Air Asia have made tourism more affordable to the wider Asian tourist market (Yeung et al., 2012). Three, short-haul travel within Asia is likely to cost less than long-haul and so the distance decay effect likely favours regional travel within the continent (Yun and Joppe, 2011). This is because increased travel distances are likely to incur higher costs. Fourth, the influential role of media-induced tourism has triggered a steady stream of visitors through movies, drama series, reality television programs and comics (Liou, 2010;
Mostafanezhad and Promburom, 2018). Two beneficiaries of media-induced tourism are Japan and Korea, with the term “Hallyu”, otherwise known as the Korean wave, associated with the latter (Kim and Nam, 2016). It is in this rise of intra-Asia tourism trends that solo travel has also increased.

Asia also has its fair share of mega events. Since the early 2000s, the continent has featured sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup 2002 in Japan and South Korea, the Beijing 2008 summer Olympics and will feature future mega events such as the Dubai World Expo 2020 and the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. Muller (2015) characterised mega events using four attributes – visitor appeal, media publicity, high costs of investment and potential for transformation. As such, the Rugby World Cup (2019) in this research is a mega event by its scale of operations, allotted resources and volume of tourists. In tourism, academic literature pertaining to mega events have mostly investigated stakeholder perceptions, legacy outcomes and cost-benefit analyses (Deng et al., 2016; Dolles and Soderman, 2008; Horne and Manzenreiter, 2004; Kang and Perdue, 1994; Liu et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2012). Very little is known about the nomenclature of solo tourists and their corresponding experiences. One of the few exceptions in this domain is the work of Campbell (2009), who analysed the experiences of volunteers in support of a folk festival, where she found that solo volunteers repeatedly offered their services to find like-minded other solo volunteers. It must be emphasised that this group was a unique segment of grey nomads and so they were somewhat acquainted with one another through past volunteering interactions or forum engagements. While this offers a glimpse of solo tourists, there remains an insufficient body of work to exemplify the heterogenous nature of this market.

2.1 Theoretical gaps and research questions

The paucity of literature pertaining to solo male tourists is the justification to undertake this research. In particular, the gendered perspective framing solo travel is almost exclusively devoted to female tourists. Very little is known as to whether male tourists are likewise confronted by similar challenges and risks and how these are negotiated over tourism mobilities. Furthermore, there is also very little known about Asian solo tourists, especially those who may not necessarily be backpackers, but are of other classifications - business travellers, media-induced tourists or sporting fans for example. Guided by these theoretical gaps, the research question for this investigation is:

How is an Asian Solo male travelling mobility conceptualised?

3. Context

This research in embedded from the perspective of the author participating as an Asian solo tourist in attending the Rugby World Cup (2019) in Japan. This edition of the mega event is the first to be held in the Asia Pacific region, featuring 20 countries competing across 12 venues in the country. At the time of producing this field note, the event was still taking place between mid-September and early November 2019. Nevertheless, data were obtained from the author’s travel over a week between 23-29 September that featured movement over time and place as illustrated in Figure 1.

### Figure 1: Temporal and spatial mobility related to this research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Movement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 Sep 2019</td>
<td>Tokyo to Nagoya (air)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Sep 2019</td>
<td>Nagoya to Kumamoto (air)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Sep 2019</td>
<td>Kumamoto to Fukuoka (high-speed rail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Sep 2019</td>
<td>Fukuoka to Nagoya (air)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Sep 2019</td>
<td>Nagoya to Tokyo (air)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The decision to travel in the sequence as illustrated in Figure 1 was largely influenced by the availability of match tickets that the author could obtain over the previous months. Despite rugby’s lack of prominence and popularity as a sport in Japan, match tickets were heavily subscribed, with reportedly almost 98% of tickets sold for the competition (Rugby World Cup, 2019). Notwithstanding the high demand, three match tickets were secured: Two in Nagoya and one other in Fukuoka. As such, scheduling of the itinerary as depicted in Figure 1 was aimed at maximising the time spent in the country by organising sightseeing and visiting friends in conjunction with attending the respective matches. Flights between the cities were the most often used mode of transport because of time and cost considerations. The most direct and cheapest transport option was chosen to get between the cities as shown in Figure 2. In addition, a conscious decision was made to stay at 3-star hotels to keep costs down, while also ensuring that this approach would differ to traditional backpacker accommodation that would likely be associated with hostels.

4. Method

The method used for this research is autoethnography. According to Butz and Besio (2009), autoethnography is characterised by the articulation of one’s lived experienced as embedded within a socially constructed setting. Autoethnography teases out the reflexivity of personal encounters from the researcher’s own perspective (Jones et al., 2016; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Autoethnography seeks to unpack meanings from one’s own identity, the physical spaces and the interactions with others to reveal insights and explain phenomena (Hamilton et al., 2008). The decision to adopt autoethnography as a method of choice was guided by a few considerations. As discussed earlier in the review of literature to date, very little insights from an Asian solo male tourist perspective has been uncovered and even less outside the realm of backpacking experiences. Furthermore, current knowledge to date is highly skewed towards an etic perspective. In other words, studies are undertaken from the perspectives of researchers looking into the experiences of his or her participants (Monterrubio, 2018; Steele and Dredge, 2017). In contrast, studies from an emic perspective, located within the participant, are rare in the domain of solo tourists. Therefore, this justifies the using of autoethnography as a method of choice to inform a better grasp of Asian solo male tourism mobilities.

Despite its inherent strengths, autoethnography is not without its criticisms. Wall (2016) alluded to the polarised views of the use of autoethnography because of its potential for subjective bias. After all, autoethnographies are positioned from the perspective of an individual, written in the first person and could be influenced by one’s culture, social backgrounds and attitudes (Winkler, 2018). Nevertheless, these limitations are addressed...
by adhering to other scholars’ recommendations for autoethnography to encompass a range of data types (Sparkes, 2000; Spry, 2009). Guided by these principles, I collated data in the form of handwritten field notes in a journal, photographs over the duration of travel, observations on-site at the various destinations and casual conversations with other sport-induced tourists and residents to the Rugby World Cup (2019). Such rich data serve to triangulate insights for the research and thereby stimulate critical reflexivity as an indication of quality (Humphreys, 2005).

The application of autoethnography has likewise been applied across a range of tourism and leisure-related settings (Anderson and Austin, 2012). Some studies justify the adoption of autoethnography as a lens in which one’s passion for leisure drives temporal and spatial mobilities (Best, 2017; Frost and Laing, 2015). Others emphasise how the method conjures powerful mechanisms to mitigate challenging emotions when confronted with sad tourism experiences (Cohen, 2019; Megehee et al., 2008). Related to this research on sport and tourism, autoethnography has also amplified the insights of managing events, volunteer experiences and event participation (Coghlan, 2012; Kodama et al., 2013; Larsen, 2014). Evidently, autoethnography is a powerful tool to illuminate innate voices that lead towards socially constructed value propositions (Caldwell et al., 2011). As such, it provides strong validation to be adopted as the method for this research.

Auto-ethnography involves analysing personal experiences and behaviour to explore and understand the wider socio-cultural experiences and meanings associated with a phenomenon (Ellis et al., 2011). Hence, it is necessary to reveal some of my personal characteristics as immersed in the context of an Asian solo male tourist, so that readers can understand and appreciate the lens in which tourism mobilities are negotiated for the purpose of this research.

I am in my 1940s and was born in South East Asia where I spent the first three decades of my life in the region before undertaking postgraduate studies in an English-speaking country, where I has now been living for the past 10 years. I have undertaken solo travel as a sports-tourist on a few occasions in the past, for instance in attending the 2000 soccer tournament, the Japan and South Korea 2002 FIFA World Cup and has also travelled as a solo business event attendee or organiser numerous times over my professional career. As such, solo travel is not a new experience to me. I am also proficient in numerous Asian languages and dialects such as Chinese, Cantonese, Hokkien and Japanese, which is an added advantage when travelling within several Asian countries.

The assortment of data I collated over the week-long duration was first sorted in a chronological order each evening. Some of these vignettes included simple items such as restaurant receipts, as they also formed evidence of and trigger memories to evoke the social settings where meals with other rugby tourists or interesting phenomenon happened. I reflected on each day’s events by diarising my experiences in a hand-written journal and also compiled a folio of photographs and a voice recording of key incidents of the day, both positive and negative. The use of photographs is a powerful stimulus to visualise and recollect ideas, as supported by Scarles (2010). Diaries were continuously revisited over the course of the week, where I often questioned and probed as to why I had allowed or, perhaps, (sub) consciously drifted into points of offering assistance. Was it because of altruistic reasons and hoping that other rugby tourists had a memorable time in Japan? There was something in me that, perhaps clicked in terms of taking on an impromptu host role, possibly because Japan is my favourite destination. After all, locating oneself amidst the wider socio-cultural affinity with the context is a core feature of autoethnography (Ellis, 2004). Data was then aggregated to the key themes, essentially as roles, as those were most striking characteristics of my Asian solo sport tourism mobility. Approaching the data in this manner was not without its tensions. I was aware of the ethical dilemmas as each day unfolded because while I was also enjoying myself as a solo sport tourist, I was conscientiously documenting and detailing my interactions with the “other”. My offer of help
was no doubt genuine, but in the (re)production of this research, these locals and other tourists are, perhaps overshadowed by my personal narrative. Such ethical concerns have been a common trait among studies involving autoethnography (Mendez, 2013; Wall, 2008). These concerns notwithstanding, the strength of an autoethnography is to reach deep into one’s deep emotional and intimate lives and create meaning with a given phenomenon (Ellis, 1999). This gives me the conviction to reflect and report my experiences to add to the solo tourism conversation through an Asian male lens.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1 An unlikely sport fan

Over the course of the travels to various cities, it began to dawn on me that I was, perhaps, an unlikely sport fan associated with the Rugby World Cup (2019). While waiting for my flight from Tokyo to Nagoya, I met an Australian couple who were also boarding the same plane and so I asked if they were also travelling as sports tourists. They were somewhat surprised at my question because they either met Western sports fans or local Japanese residents at the games, so to meet a sport tourist of an Oriental appearance who was not Japanese was, perhaps, unexpected. I thought this was somewhat unusual, as I would imagine there may be other Asian sports fans from outside of Japan in the audience. Then, upon arrival in Nagoya, I also received surprising looks from the hotel concierge when I mentioned that I was going to the game. Perhaps, I was stereotyped to be someone in Nagoya for business and so revealing the sport fan in me somewhat did not fit into a typical profile of how hosts had perceived Rugby World Cup supporters.

Compared with existing literature on Asian solo tourists, stereotypes have been identified across several studies. For instance, Yang et al. (2018a, 2018b) alluded to how Asian solo women may be subject to stereotypes of being of loose morals and seeking wealthy spouses during their travels. Seow and Brown (2018) highlighted that backpacking was often framed from a Western-centric context and therefore being an Asian solo tourist may precipitate prejudices such as being an illegal migrant. It follows from the findings that stereotypes are not merely limited to Asian solo female tourists or backpacking itineraries but also confront Asian solo male tourists. This is especially so when the experience involves sport tourism that has largely been dominated by Western countries such as England, Australia and New Zealand and where spectators mostly attend games in groups (Tuck, 2003). As such, it is a rarity that a rugby sport tourist who comes in the form of an Asian solo male from outside of Japan has debunked some stereotypes.

5.2 An impromptu translator

My simple understanding of Japanese resulted in me being an impromptu translator on numerous occasions during this journey. To foreign tourists visiting Japan, several were rather lost in the big crowds and in regions where English was still not widely spoken outside of the main tourist belts. As such, I helped other tourists with varied queries – Transport costs of getting to and from the stadium, locating, which platforms to change trains, ordering food that was not spicy. In addition, I also tried my very best to translate the rules of rugby union to a few Japanese residents who sat next to me.

Amidst their quizzical looks of a game that was far more complex than sumo or baseball, I wondered how residents gazed at the sport and foreign tourists in their hometowns. Their knowledge of rugby or the lack thereof, was also something that I needed to negotiate in this socially constructed space of a stadium. Observing many of the locals in proximity, I realised that many of them may have attended to support their cities and brokering the roles of cultural ambassadors to foreign visitors. Therefore, it did not matter to them as to how much of rugby they understood, what counted was they had portrayed to the world their hospitality and welcoming the other, which is known in Japanese as “Omotenashi”
(Morishita and Kosaka, 2017). The term Omotenashi has a far deeper meaning that the literal meaning of hospitality, where Morishita (2016) illustrates three other aspects of hospitality through offering food and sustenance, cultural exchanges and the (re)production of specific acts or experiences. For instance, Surajaya (2020) used the example of Japanese tea ceremonies as a manifestation of Omotenashi in practice. Importantly, the host in the Japanese context does not appear subservient to the guests but is co-creating the experience of sharing an important facet of local cultures to those less familiar with the values and traditions (Belal et al., 2013). In my journey to the Rugby World Cup, this important distinction of how Omotenashi was represented is best epitomised by the rows of local volunteers who would form a line either side of the exits to the bus or train station and give high-fives to departing spectators. Compared to existing literature, most studies to date on translation have approached this from the perspective of hosts seeking to offer authentic interpretations to visiting guests. This finding was also something that did not come up in other studies concerning solo tourists from an Asian perspective. Choi and Wu (2018) is, perhaps, one of the few studies that investigated how sojourners communicate with their information recipients, emphasising that the frequency and positive framing of information enhanced communication effectiveness.

I reflected on my actions as an impromptu translator and realised that I was in a privileged position of being able to speak some Japanese and very familiar with the culture having visited the country numerous times, as childhood. I had also had solo travel experiences to Japan prior to this trip, and perhaps this gave me confidence to help others for altruistic reasons.

5.3 A presumed local resident

Having an Oriental appearance in Japan resulted in the presumption that I was also a local resident. On several occasions over the course of this journey, I was mistaken to be Japanese and treated as if I was a local resident. For instance, at a local restaurant in Fukuoka, I ordered my meal at the counter then proceeded to take a seat at one of the nearby tables, expecting the order to be then brought to me. To my surprise, I received my order in a takeaway bag. I then mentioned that I had intended to dine in, but the wait staff thought that I was in a hurry to get back to work and so assumed that I would be consuming the meal as a takeaway option. Then, in Kumamoto, I stopped during office hours at the Rugby World Cup merchandise area in a downtown department store and noticed staff staring at me. I then realised that it may be uncommon for men to be at such premises at such a time, with the shop assistant apologising that she thought I had the day off at work or was looking for employment. I realised that being of a similar ethnic appearance as Japanese men led to some awkward situations. For instance, after the rugby game in Nagoya, I was walking back from the train station to my accommodation and was accosted outside a business where a lady wanted me to enter a building. I looked at the neon lights and realised that this was a Japanese soapland or the equivalent of prostitution services in other countries (Morishima, 2008). I had to explain that I was a foreigner and not interested in her advances, which she then frowned and thought I was pulling a joke on her, as soaplands are almost exclusively only provided to Japanese men (Sachiko, 1988).

In some ways, not looking like a “Gaijin” (foreigner in Japanese), afforded me time and space to move around freely without being treated like the other. Ishii (2001) broadly defined Gaijin as to symbolically mean strange others and are, therefore, not expected to conform to the Japanese way of life. As such, when foreigners develop greater familiarity to the language, customs and Japanese cultures, they become increasingly expected to behave like locals and understand their roles in society (Cervi, 1990). As discussed in this section, there are also certain pre-conceived notions of Japanese men that are woven into the social fabric of everyday lives (Barancovaite-Skindaraviciene, 2009). These are morphed onto other individuals who may present similar physical attributes and as such
blur the boundaries between residents and tourists as I experienced during this journey. Therefore, it dawned on me that this unpacked a further dimension of tourist mobilities and suggests that this term challenges the dichotomous view of locals and others, by reconceptualizing varying degrees of “Gaijinness”, as supported by Erffmeyer and Al-Khatib (1997).

5.4 An unconventional wanderer

Over the course of my travels I made a conscious decision to wander off the beaten track to explore the local sights and attractions and assess if I would meet other Rugby World Cup tourists along the way. In many of the host cities, the tournament organisers have set up a fanzone often in prominent locations such as the town hall, adjacent to main train stations or the stadium (Greuner, 2019). Each fanzone was a temporary space for fans and locals to watch live games, witness local entertainment and purchase food and beverage in a social environment. In addition, game days had main streets fenced off from main transport hubs to the perimeter of the stadiums. To see the local way of life, I would drift off outside of these constructed boundaries to explore how everyday lives are experiences in the community.

In Kumamoto, I went to Kumamon Square (www.kumamon-sq.jp/en/), which is one of the main tourist attractions where visitors can potentially meet with Kumamon, the black bear mascot, that is, now the marketing icon of the city (Soltani et al., 2018). In queuing up to meet Kumamon, it then dawned on me that other fellow visitors were of Asian origin and that these consisted of school groups, families with young children as well as teenagers. I was clearly the odd one out, but I was happy just to soak in the atmosphere given that I was not in a hurry to go elsewhere. However, reflecting on this experience made me wonder – where were the Rugby World Cup international tourists? Kumamon is popular with the different target markets who mostly originate from East Asia such as Taiwan, China and Hong Kong (Lindstrom, 2019). Hence, even though Kumamon was created in 2010, its popularity would be confined to media-induced tourism from proximate regions (Isomura et al., 2015). Another plausible explanation was that during the visit to Kumamoto, the city was yet to host its first Rugby World Cup match. As such, there may be little incentive for the sports fans to be in the city during that time. Nonetheless, sports fans are likely to also use the tournament as an added motivation to see other attractions, especially if this was their first visit or, perhaps, having flown long distances to get to the destination (Jones, 2001; Werner et al., 2016).

In contrast, the fanzones were abuzz with activity that featured large volumes of sports fans on game days. Many visited these fanzones hours before match kick-off times, with other groups also congregating in other areas such as pubs. It is well established in academic literature that alcohol sponsorship and consumption are common markers of rugby tournaments (Gee, 2013; Rines, 2002). Weed (2008) postulated that in some instances, the pub becomes a proximate communal meeting place for fans to gather and undertake virtual spectatorship, especially in male-dominated sports. As such, it can be argued that such sports fans may (sub)consciously gravitate to these zones to build up their expectations in the lead up to the event.

The Rugby World Cup match in Fukuoka involved either a subway ride and a three km walk to the venue or a subway ride and an event shuttle bus (for a fee). Both options were likely to be heavily used and so I decided on taking a public bus from the central bus station to a stop close to the stadium instead. After alighting, an elderly lady sheltered me with her umbrella for a significant length of the walk. My wandering allowed me the opportunity to have a chat with this woman as she was walking in the same direction for most of the journey, as she lived in proximity to the stadium. She probed many questions – where I was from, why I was by myself, what was interesting about rugby etc, perhaps, curious as to how I found out about the local buses when most brochures and volunteers would have directed spectators towards the allocated modes of transport. I realised my unconventional
decisions had somehow deviated from the defined spaces of the event and somehow made me drift into the liminal spaces of neither a local, nor a typical rugby-induced tourist.

All the same, my encounters have uncovered aspects of Asian solo male travelling mobilities in the context of sports-induced tourism. Through using an autoethnographic lens, I revealed emic perspectives to address some of the existing knowledge gaps, which has been positioned mainly from an etic or outside-in perspective.

5.5 Discussion

Overall, the findings show the multiplicity of ways to advance the understanding of Asian solo male travelling mobilities, albeit in a sport-induced manner. The temporal and spatial movement between host cities of the Rugby World Cup (2019) has provided four distinctive themes to conceptualise tourism mobilities from a male, gendered perspective. It is acknowledged that these outcomes are, perhaps, influenced by my own familiarity with the destination and sport. This has generated unique aspects of experiencing tourism that differs from rugby fans visiting Japan or local residents attending a game. The autoethnography method used for the purpose of my research likewise triggered a highly personalised perspective, which offers a novel way of understanding an Asian solo male gaze. Furthermore, the various roles simultaneously assumed as an unlikely sport fan, an impromptu translator, a presumed local resident and an unconventional wanderer opens up wider conversations around possibilities and constraints faced by solo tourists within the current scope of academic literature.

The research, therefore, makes four key contributions. First, studies to date highlight that motivations and purposes of solo travel are largely informed by exploring the world, experiencing new cultures and escaping one’s home environment. In most cases, these trips have been investigated from the lens of backpackers. The contribution of this research is to offer an alternative view of solo travel from the perspective of a sport fan visiting the Rugby World Cup (2019) and illuminate the insights related to a mega event context. Second, most studies to date are conducted from the positions of solo women tourists, with very little examined from male perspectives. The contribution of this research is the provision of further insights into this knowledge gap and uncover masculine, gendered roles of solo travel. Moreover, literature to date is often investigated from an etic perspective. In other words, studies probe solo tourists about their experiences and attempt to deconstruct meanings from such data through interviews or focus groups. The third contribution, therefore, is to take an emic perspective of solo travel, by applying an autoethnography to understand personal meanings and the intersectionality of roles arising from the tourism experience. According to Mooney (2018), intersectionality is the simultaneous crossover of identities for a variety of reasons and roles. In this space, I assumed a range of identities that would have traditionally been reserved for local hosts or sports fan in a mutually exclusive manner. By virtue of my passport and purpose I was clearly a tourist, but I had intersected with hosting roles as a translator, tour guide and co-diner etc, further blurring the boundaries accorded to tourist mobilities.

Collectively, autoethnography affords new insights to understanding Asian solo male mobilities by unpacking socio-cultural experiences that may be implicit in previous studies. Being immersed with the local culture and sport meant that I could take on a variety of roles such as a translator or tour guide. These roles are often considered to be professions in the tourism industry, but my identity has allowed me to perform such roles in a serendipitous manner, even though I was cognisant of the fact that I was first and foremost, a rugby-induced tourist. The autoethnography method also facilitated a wider discussion of gender stereotypes that prior to this research, was mostly located amongst studies on Asian solo women. This research has extended gender stereotypes to sports-induced tourism, especially where I was clearly not fitting into the Anglo-centric roots and persona of rugby fans. Given Japan’s success at this Rugby World Cup edition where they became the first
Asian country to win all its group ties and qualify for the knockout rounds, it will be interesting to explore if such stereotypes of become gradually eroded in future competitions, when single Japanese men travel overseas in support of their national team become more common.

6. Conclusion, limitations and future studies

In conclusion, this research has conceptualised tourism mobilities from an Asian solo male perspective within the context of the Rugby World Cup (2019). It amplified three distinctive roles assumed as a solo traveller – an unlikely sport fan, an impromptu translator, a presumed local resident and an unconventional wanderer, each of which takes on a unique dimension that, perhaps, is uncharacteristic of a typical sports-induced tourist. These surprising outcomes are a detachment from the dominant discourses in a Western, masculine dominated sporting code, but could trigger a new wave of Asian male rugby fans travelling solo on the back of Japan’s unexpected victory against higher ranked Ireland in the group stages of the tournament (Ritchie, 2019).

Through an autoethnographic lens, the research has conceptualised a new blurring landscape that interrogates the host-guest relationship. This was a peculiar outcome, where I identified myself as a sports-induced tourist and yet in bearing a similar appearance to host communities and speaking the local language, found myself in a position to act as a makeshift translator and tour guide occasionally. It is to be emphasised that this was, perhaps, fortuitous, as I am standing from a privileged position in understanding the sporting code and also familiarity with Japan. The types of roles would unlikely materialise had this mega event been associated with another sport e.g. cricket in an unfamiliar country such as India. Nevertheless, autoethnography allowed a more personal glimpse of the socio-cultural settings within the landscape of an Asian solo male sporting tourist in this context. The method offers opportunities for wider reflexivity and opens up further conversations and debates about how tourism mobilities can be understood, approached and operationalised.

The research is not without its limitations. Adopting an autoethnographic stance may be subject to personal (un)conscious biases or idiosyncrasies that are likely to differ among other Asian solo male tourists. Also, other solo tourists visiting alternate cities over the course of the tournament may encounter similar or dissimilar experiences because of the serendipitous nature of the travel. Finally, the research was confined to the context of the Rugby World Cup tournament, whereas other types of festivals or events may reveal different perspectives.

All the same, the research has charted avenues for future studies. Building on the work of Heimtun and Abelsen (2013), some scholars may wish to investigate if the identities located in this research are also evident in other types of solo male tourism experiences. Others may seek to compare satisfaction derived from travelling solo or in-groups from the perspective of sports or event-induced tourism journeys (Xu, 2018). Another direction for future investigation could examine if Asian solo travel opportunities or constraints are influenced by family upbringing or other socio-demographic factors (Yang and Tung, 2018).

By addressing some of the knowledge gaps related to Asian solo male tourists, these insights can also inform managerial practices in catering to the growing numbers of such a segment internationally. Destinations can redesign tourism and hospitality infrastructure and social settings such as co-living spaces and solo dining seating arrangements to facilitate solo male tourist interactions with one another (Lam, 2018; Ting, 2016). Related to sports, tournaments can feature pop-up events around the city to allow solo tourists to meet up not just for drinks but also to explore the sights together, and perhaps share some of the costs such as group admission tickets. These suggestions provide options for Asian solo male tourists to come together where there may be mutual interests, though it is acknowledged
that some may refrain from participation to have the flexibility of time and serendipitously exploring the destination. Overall, this research has advanced the appreciation of Asian solo male tourism mobilities from a sport-induced perspective and encourages future work in this area to provide richer and interesting insights to a growing market.

References


Further reading


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