

Editorial

New Tourism Research

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Have we passed a turning point in tourism research? In early analyses of the field of tourism and its associated research efforts, commentators were perhaps overly pessimistic and premature in their conclusions.

For example Tribe (1997: 653-654) concluded that

First, while there are four main approaches, the tourism studies that is developing in higher education tends to be crystallising around the business interdisciplinary approach ... Second, on account of the relative strength of the business of tourism, because of the increasing importance of [extradisciplinary] knowledge and because of the power of the performativity principle ... the business world of tourism is pushing out at the expense of other parts ...

This worry about the development of tourism studies was echoed more recently by Franklin and Crag (2001:6) who lamented an understanding of tourism that has tended to be reduced to a set of economic activities, so that:

our understanding of tourism has become fetishized as a thing, a product, a behaviour – but in particular an economic thing.

Franklin and Crag (2001:6) also criticize 'a tendency for studies [of tourism researchers] to follow a template', Botterill (2001:199) suggested that 'the assumptions that underlie social science research in tourism are seldom made explicit' and Jamal and Hollinshead (2001) adverted to the underserved power of qualitative inquiry in tourism research.

Against this the (CAUTHE) Council for Australian Tourism and Hospitality Education) Conference in 2004 seemed to offer the perfect opportunity for a more prolonged and profound examination of the process and products of tourism research under its title *Creating Tourism Knowledge*. Yet, Ateljevic *et al.* writing in this volume express their frustrations with this event, which

... featur[ed] mainstream, industry-driven themes, underpinned by objective and depersonalised accounts of definitive truth. Critical perspectives were left largely hidden within paper streams ordered by topic rather than paradigm or perspective.

It is true that for a couple of decades research was

overwhelmed by the burgeoning analysis of the business of tourism. Subsequently, the main effort in alternative tourism studies got temporarily dominated by, and sidelined in, sustainable tourism where the number of publications demonstrates a remarkable research effort. However, tourism research is not in the grip of a restrictive paradigm and is hardly affected by performativity – two factors which Tribe (1997) had identified as boxing in tourism research. Indeed, there is good reason to agree with Cooper (2002:37) that 'tourism research is at an important turning point in its development'.

For the totality of tourism studies has now developed beyond the narrow boundaries of an applied business field and has the characteristics of a fledgling post-modern field of research. A sign of increasing maturity is the emergence of more reflexivity and there is evidence of an increasing range of tourism research which offers a counter-balance to tourism as a business practice and which encourages researchers to follow innovative and radical lines of enquiry. We may even point to it the establishment of 'new tourism research'. This new turn is showing signs of organization and dissemination through articles, journals, texts networks and conferences. Articles reflecting this new turn include Veijola and Jokinen's (1994) *The Body in Tourism*, Aitchison's (2001) *Theorizing Other Discourses of Tourism, Gender and Culture: Can the Subaltern Speak (in tourism)?*, Botterill's (2003) *Autoethnographic Narrative on Tourism Research Epistemologies*, Fullagar's (2002) *Narratives of Travel: Desire and the Movement of Feminine, Subjectivity* and Hollinshead's (1999) *Surveillance of the Worlds of Tourism: Foucault and the Eye-of-power*. Journals which actively promote this new turn include *Tourist Studies* and the *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*. Phillimore and Goodson's (2004) *Qualitative Research in Tourism: Ontologies, Epistemologies and Methodologies* represent a text that signals a mainstream publisher's interest of new approaches to tourism research (and thus by implication an emerging market) whilst conferences which such as *Embodying Tourism Research: Advancing Critical Approaches* (Dubrovnik 2005)¹ explicitly invite contributions 'that demonstrate innovative theoretical and methodological approaches'.

The articles in this special issue continue in the direction of this new turn and I am indebted to two of the contributors, Melanie Smith and Irena Ateljevic *et al.*, for particular insights that offer a dual theme for understanding the articles that follow. First, Smith reproduces the following quote from Silverman (1997:251).

We owe it to our audiences to surprise them by inviting them, with great clarity, to look anew at the world they already know.

This seems a most apposite way of introducing a series of articles that explore the territory of research in tourism. Indeed it seems to draw a useful line between research which is mainly confirmatory and reproductive and that which seeks to reconceptualize. All the papers in this special issue seek to share new ways of seeing the world of tourism and each offer further contributions to the developing repertoire of tourism research methods and approaches. They each encourage an examination of the taken for granted in tourism research under headings which include:

- reflexivity
- community
- discourse
- triangulation / crystallization
- the phenomenon

Ateljevic *et al.* in introducing the idea of entanglement in tourism research enable this to be used as a thread which connects the articles and allows some preliminary discussion of their stance and contribution. For it seems that the research on parade here sometimes seeks greater entanglements (with for example its embodied author(s) or its objects), sometimes seeks disentanglement (from for example restrictive approaches and prevailing discourses) and sometimes both.

For example, Ateljevic *et al.* adopt a reflexive stance that follows the lead given by Botterill (2003). They make a conscious decision to appear centrally in their research. They, thus abandon the god(ess)-trick or the hidden researcher position of 'the view from nowhere' in favour of a full disclosure of person and identity. But for them reflexivity is not just a self-indulgent practice of using the first person or writing themselves into the research. Rather reflexivity means looking and reflecting inwards upon themselves as researchers, and outwards upon those that they 'research'.

In their paper they choose to concentrate on what they label entanglements by which they mean those forces that

influence, constrain, and shape the complex and dynamic act of producing and reproducing knowledge. These entanglements centre around four broad but interlinking themes comprising:

- the 'ideologies' and 'legitimacies' which govern and guide tourism research outputs
- the 'research accountability' environment which decides what is acceptable as tourism research
- their 'positionality' as embodied researchers whose lives, experiences and worldviews impact on our studies
- their 'intersectionality with the 'researched' as we carry out our research relationships with the people that we profess to study.

Hannam and Knox bring much needed clarity to the use of methods which fall under the general heading of discourse analysis. They survey the different types of discourse analysis and examine the different ways in which it has been deployed. Their review of previous research in this area reveals that tourism scholars have utilized discourse analysis in an eclectic fashion. The particular value of their paper is the differentiation offered between content analysis, simple textual analysis, semiotic analysis and post-structuralist forms of discourse analysis which should provide a useful framework for other tourism researchers to use. Hannam and Knox underline the point that discourse analysis uncovers the fact that all texts are produced intertextually in relation to other texts and that they are all embedded within power relations that give degrees of authority. Their article cautions that the discourses within, which we operate largely determine what we enable ourselves to know and that what we look for as tourism researchers has a preconditioning effect on the outcomes of our investigations. But the article also offers ways by which researchers can avoid narrative entanglements through a critical and reflexive application of techniques of discourse analysis.

Cole offers through her article a recipe for getting entangled with a community in two villages in *Ngadha, Flores, Indonesia*. Situating her approach as an example of 'action anthropology', Cole sets out to steer a deliberate path between applied anthropology and interpretative anthropology and provides the means by which people within a community can represent themselves and identify the nature of and solution to their problems. To this end, Cole outlines the use of focus groups, the special issues regarding their use in her research setting and how their use enabled learning to be a two way process. She makes the

interesting move to align her focus group meetings with the local custom of *Arisan* gatherings. Based upon this she conducted her focus groups in a setting which included her provision of a meal and palm toddy.

Interestingly, where Cole concentrates on some of the processes that enable deeper entanglement (e.g., the use of focus groups, the absence of a table, the avoidance of the written and the importance of a meal) her paper does not foreground any of the philosophical issues that signal the complexity of multi-entanglements (e.g., the entanglement of the discourse(s) that guide the focus group conversations (Hannam and Knox), or the entanglement of herself as an embodied researcher and the potential impact on her study of her own experiences and worldview (Ateljevic *et al.*).

Northcote and Macbeth discuss the validity of Resident Perceptions Survey (RPS) approaches to Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in tourism and contend that there are serious limitations involved in RPS approaches when employed as a stand-alone SIA method. They question whether the results obtained from these RPSs indicate actual impacts from tourism at all. They argue that RPS results need to be supplemented by other research data, such as that obtained from visitor surveys, participant observation, in-depth interviews and quantitative social indicator research to establish valid measures of social impacts. In terms of the flavour of this special issue they find that social impacts are informed from a tangled web of research approaches hence the importance, in their view, of triangulation. Triangulation they argue is not only important to understand the effects of tourism development on host communities so that tourism planning is undertaken in an informed manner.

Coles, Duval and Hall wish to disentangle tourism studies from its current definition and research approach. They do this with the view to re-entangle tourism with a both a more permissive contemporary definition and research approach. Taking definition first Coles, Duval and Hall lament the fact that nearly everywhere 'tourism is introduced as a journey from the everyday, the ordinary to the extra-ordinary, the exotic.' They find this an unduly restrictive conceptualization and argue instead

for a reconsideration of tourism as a subject to embrace the complexities, ambiguities and overlaps among different types of human movement, among which tourism is but one distinctive dimension ...A much fuller understanding of contemporary tourism requires it to form an integral component in emerging post-disciplinary studies of mobilities.

Turning to research approach and disciplinarity, Coles, Duval and Hall argue for fresh thinking about how we approach the subject of tourism and discuss the merits

of a post-disciplinary approach. Post-disciplinarity they define according to Sayer (1999: 5) as 'when scholars forget about disciplines and whether ideas can be identified with any particular one; they identify with learning rather than with disciplines.' They argue that 'from a post-discipline perspective, ideas and connections are pursued to their logical conclusion rather than to the limits set by their discipline.'

Unless we move away from more trenchant, dated views to ones that recognise that tourism is mobilised fluidly and fluently beyond disciplinary boundaries, perceptions of tourism and the tourist are going to remain conditioned by orthodoxies of conceptualization and approach that reflect earlier times, not necessarily present-day conditions.

Finally, Smith finds herself part of the interesting entanglements represented in this special issue. As an inhabitant and worker in Greenwich (UK) she is entangled in the First space, the materiality, of the place. As a researcher she contributes to the tangles of second space, the imagined representations, of Greenwich. Yet, the desire of Smith is to liberate herself from these entanglements so as to allow herself a less constrained ideation of Greenwich. To do this she invokes Soja's concept of 'Thirdspace', a notoriously complex approach which as Barnett (1997:528) notes, is important for saying that 'time, space and society are mutually constitutive' and for encouraging, whatever, multidisciplinary approaches are needed to understand the situation under inspection. In discussing the potential contribution of Third Space theory to her own research into Greenwich, Smith introduces us to her own entangled web of empirical inroads and offers some useful local, practical readings and examples of Thirdspace ideas. Soja used his concept of Thirdspace to offer a series of journeys through the postmetropolis (concentrating on Los Angeles), which produced six provocative discourses (or readings) including 'the fractal city' (of multiple and divided sociality), 'the carceral archepelego' (the privatized and sanitized city) and 'the exoplois' (the city turned inside out). The logical conclusion of Smith's continuing research will be to offer a similarly novel, artistic and eclectically entangled reading of Greenwich.

Endnote

Phillimore and Goodson's (2004) *Qualitative Research in Tourism: ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies* represents a text that signals a mainstream publisher's interest in new approaches to tourism research (and thus by implication an emerging market) whilst conferences such as *Embodying Tourism Research: Advancing Critical Approaches* held in Dubrovnik 2005, explicitly invite contributions 'that demonstrate innovative theoretical and methodological approaches'.

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