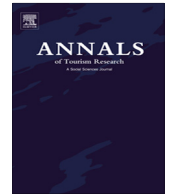




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures

The frictions of slow tourism mobilities: Conceptualising campervan travel

Sharon Wilson^a, Kevin Hannam^{b,*}^a University of Sunderland, Faculty of Business and Law, Reg Vardy Centre, St Peter's Campus, Sunderland SR6 0DD, United Kingdom^b Edinburgh Napier University, The Business School, Craiglockhart Campus, Edinburgh EH14 1DJ, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 October 2016

Revised 20 July 2017

Accepted 24 July 2017

Keywords:

Slowness

Materialities

Mobilities

Friction

Campervans

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the materialities of campervan travel as a relatively 'slow' form of tourism mobilities. The research is based upon qualitative research with campervan owners and users in the UK. Previous research has emphasised notions of freedom associated with campervan travel and how it has developed its own subculture. However, we seek to move beyond this to examine the frictions of socially and physically embodied practices of campervan travel in order to address the call for more multi-sensory understandings of tourism mobilities. In our discussion of campervan travel, mobility is understood as intensities of circulations, uncertainties and relational affects where different aspects of friction are central. We conclude by discussing the campervan in relation to wider aspects of slow travel.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

In his reflections on the materialities of his own travel with a VW (Volkswagen) Campervan called 'Rosie', the cultural geographer [Phil Crang \(2013: 277\)](#) notes that "It's an old van and it doesn't go very fast," but significantly it is a "fragment of material culture" (280) that plays a role in the construction of his own social identity. Although he is ambivalent about his ownership of this vehicle, he emphasises that his campervan is not just a symbolic appendage but somewhere and something that has relations with his family as users: "It does things, we do things with it, and it does things to us" (283). Indeed, [Southerton, Shove, Warde, and Deem \(2001, 5.4\)](#) have illustrated how the practices of caravanning involves in situ physical constraints that delimit social worlds but also that caravans are more than simply objects: "they may also set the stage, defining challenges and dilemmas as well as favouring or enforcing certain forms of action." As [Sherry Turkle \(2007\)](#) has noted such objects or machines are things we think with and think in and which we grow to love as emotional and embodied appendages. In this paper we develop these insights by discussing the materialities of campervan travel as a relatively 'slow' form of tourism mobilities. In particular, we seek to analyse the socio-technical frictions involved in campervan travel instead of the specific sites of caravanning (on the latter see [Blichfeldt, 2009](#)).

[Sheller and Urry \(2000, 747\)](#) have argued that the car may be restrictive in comparison to the environmental sensations other forms of mobility such as train travel may offer. They argued that as the car acts as a form of 'dwelling at speed' individuals may lose the opportunity to attain a variety of experiences which include the "the sights, sounds, tastes, temperatures and smells of the city" which are consequently transformed into a delimited experience due to the enclosed space they

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Sharon.wilson@sunderland.ac.uk (S. Wilson), k.hannam@napier.ac.uk, kevin_hannam@hotmail.co.uk (K. Hannam).

travel in. In contrast we argue that campervan travel and the frictions that this form of relatively restricted dwelling-in-motion entails affords more rather than less environmental experiences. The paper develops a novel theoretical point, namely the concept of friction which has hitherto been understood as primarily in terms of its symbolic or its material consequences. Hence our objective is to develop the concept of friction as a multi-sensory and embodied aspect of travel (using the context of the VW campervan).

Previous research has emphasised notions of freedom associated with campervan travel and how it has developed its own subculture (Caldicott, Scherrer, & Jenkins, 2014; Kearns, Collins, & Bates, 2016). In the Australian context, the proliferation of campervans has become a significant element of backpacker tourists, more elderly 'grey nomads' and also Chinese tourists renting campervans all of whom seek intimacy and sociality on the move (Jones & Selwood, 2012; Redshaw, 2017; Wu & Pearce, 2014). Indeed, a vehicle as a place to 'dwell in' is related to concepts of home and privacy (Urry, 2000). The related literature on caravanning holidays attests to the wider significance of having a home on the move (see Mikkelsen & Cohen, 2015). However, we seek to move beyond this to examine the frictions of the physical and socially embodied practices of campervan travel in order to address the call for more research into the multi-sensory practices of tourism mobilities (De Souza Bispo, 2016; Hannam, Butler, & Paris, 2014; Jensen, Scarles, & Cohen, 2015; Lamers, Van der Duim, & Spaargaren, 2017; Roy & Hannam, 2013).

Whilst modern vehicles are capable of moving at high speeds, the 'classic' VW campervan in contrast rarely exceeds 40 mph at peak acceleration. The relative 'sluggishness' of the vehicle has prompted discussion about the consequences of unhurried mobility on fast paced highways. As noted by Fullagar, Markwell, and Wilson (2012) 'slow travellers' in a 'fast world' have chosen to control the rhythm of their lives and in doing so subvert the dominant 'cult of speed'. Yet as tourists and leisure users attempt to use the campervan for autonomous pursuits as an expression of symbolic material freedom and identity, the challenges encountered by the campervan as 'home' as it takes to the road challenges such freedoms due to its unpredictability, discomfort and frictions.

Conceptualising mobile practices of friction

Theories of mobile practices have been developed in order to help us understand the ways in which people know the world without knowing it, the multi-sensual practices and experiences of everyday life as such proposes a post-humanistic approach to the understanding of social life (Hannam et al., 2006). As Peter Adey (2010, 149) notes: "[t]his is an approach which is not limited to representational thinking and feeling, but a different sort of thinking-feeling altogether. It is a recognition that everyday mobilities such as walking or dancing involve various combinations of thought, action, feeling and articulation." Mobilities research thus examines the embodied nature and experience of different modes of travel, seeing these modes in part as forms of material and sociable dwelling-in-motion, places of and for various activities including the various immobilities and moorings that ensue (Hannam et al., 2006) From a mobilities perspective, the concept of 'friction' can be seen not just as a metaphor but also as an integral concept for understanding the social and cultural relations in practices of mobility and immobility (Cresswell, 2013).

In her ethnographic work in Indonesia, Anna Tsing (2005, 6) has developed the concept of cultural friction which she argues informs "motion, offering it different meanings. Coercion and frustration join freedom as motion is socially informed". She emphasises that various cultural frictions occur due to processes of globalization leading to immobilities even as people and things are set in motion (Salazar & Smart, 2011). She notes that "[a]s a metaphorical image, friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (Tsing, 2006, 5). Tim Cresswell (2013, 108), meanwhile, has argued that friction is also embodied: "Friction ... is a social and cultural phenomenon that is lived and felt ... The significance of friction is in the way it draws our attention to the way in which people, things and ideas are slowed down or stopped." He emphasises the way in which friction is felt in terms of slowing down the speed of mobilities which has consequences for those who have the power to do so. Such embodied frictions can also be related to the frictions involved in transport use.

In his conceptualisation of friction in terms of transport use, Thomas Birtchnell (2016, 88) has argued that:

The reduction in friction through motorized transport has implications for automobile adoptees in the form of more convenient and comfortable travel and consequently for societies too in the design of cities to accommodate road traffic, the support for commuting and suburban living and the establishment of automobile-use as a social norm. Automobiles are ubiquitous because they reduce friction.

Birtchnell (2016) thus emphasises the material aspects of friction and the ways in which vehicles *may reduce friction* in so far as they enable various social freedoms (commuting and so on) to be practiced. But, as we shall see, in the example of the campervan, not all vehicles reduce friction. Frictions can be created and are felt through the relations involved in slowing down (Vannini, 2013). Friction should thus be conceptualised as simultaneously physical, cultural, discursive, material, embodied and suffused with dynamic power relations. In this paper we seek to demonstrate how the use of slow campervan travel emphasises these myriad frictions.

Unlike transport that cushions its passengers from the impacts of speed, weather, objects and so on, campervans (which are frequently 50 or more years old) are subject to physical geographies such as meteorological forces, driving surfaces as well as social geographies such as the influence of other vehicle users in ways that more modern vehicles are not. Hence,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5107826>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5107826>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)