

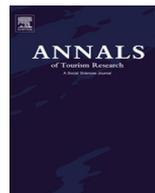


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A multisensory phenomenology of interrail mobilities



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ABSTRACT

This paper suggests that phenomenological studies of tourism mobilities can be informed by non-representational approaches. We extend recent developments in sensory tourism research and non-representational works to argue that methods upon which tourism researchers have long relied require ‘pushing’ or merging in previously underutilised ways that support these emerging areas of study. As a result, this paper embraces embodied methodologies. It integrates audio-visual impressionistic tales and netnographic snippets to shape its multisensory exploration of an under-researched European tourism and train travel phenomenon, interrail. Our analysis exemplifies how the rhythms and soundscapes of everyday rail travel inform the experience of inter-rail. Finally, we introduce the concept of *thermalscapes*, giving attention to the relatively neglected role of temperatures in tourism experiences.

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Introduction

“You must learn to heed your senses. Humans use but a tiny percentage of theirs. They barely look, they rarely listen, they never smell. . . But they talk, oh, do they talk.”

[Scott, M., *The Alchymist*, 2007, p. 149]

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Modern tourism is often viewed as constitutive of modernity's mobility (Larsen, 2001). It has been argued that train travel dilutes travel sensations (Schivelbusch, 1986). Drawing upon Boorstin (1987) and Buzard (1993), Larsen (2001, p. 83) notes how: "the tourist who sat inside the train ceased to be a traveller, a sensuous subject, and became, as noted in the popular metaphor of the century, a mere 'parcel': a blind object, who was only thinking about arriving at her/his destination, arriving as s/he left, untouched by the space traversed." Others situate the narratives of rail spaces outside of the normal routines and practices of everyday life (Kirby, 1997), or within behaviouristic frameworks (Givoni & Rietveld, 2007), reducing rail travel to a symbolic experience or a mere linear transport function.

In recent years, however, tourism mobilities research has questioned such claims, providing examples of how tourism mobility is not *only* a trivial question of overcoming distance; it is also a way of being in, sensing and experiencing various landscapes (Larsen, 2001; Roy & Hannam, 2013). Whilst these contributions have arguably worked to showcase the performative and non-representational dimensions of mobility, others have cautioned such approaches for generating an "overanimated [sic] mobile subject" (Merriman, 2014, p. 177). Indeed, waiting, slowness and even boredom can be just as important to 'mobile situations' as can those of speed, excitement and exhilaration (ibid.). This reminds us that immobilities, fixities and moorings, such as platforms, management systems and rail lines, configure and enable mobilities in the first place (Adey, 2006; Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006).

With these reflections in mind this paper offers three primary contributions. Firstly, we interrelate sensuous tourism research (Crang, 2003; Crouch & Desforges, 2003; Edensor, 2007a) and non-representational approaches (Xiao, Jafari, Cloke, & Tribe, 2013) to further inform tourism mobilities research (Hannam, Butler, & Paris, 2014). More specifically, this contribution derives from the novel application of a multisensory phenomenology inspired by the experimental aspirations of research framed within non-representational theory (NRT), to an under-researched tourism and rail travel phenomenon: interrailing (Fernandes, Sarmiento, & Matias, 2013; Johnson, 2010; Klingbeil, 1994). Secondly, to meet this end we originally employ audio-visual impressionistic tales (Van Maanen, 1988; Vannini & Taggart, 2013) and netnographic insights (Kozinets, 2010) to inform the understanding of tourism mobilities. We do so in response to suggestions that there is a: "narrowness in our understanding and representation of tourism" (Tribe, 2008, p. 924). Contributing to recent research that has adopted embodied methods as an opportunity to engage with and explore multisensual experiences (Bissell, 2010; Edensor & Holloway, 2008), this approach draws on the first author's own travel experiences as well as interrailers' perspectives to elucidate the rhythmsapes (Edensor & Holloway, 2008; Rantala & Valtonen, 2014) and soundscapes (Duffy, Waite, Gorman-Murray, & Gibson, 2011; Waite & Duffy, 2010) of interrailing. Lastly, a further contribution to knowledge emerges as we focus on the sensuous influence of temperatures in this context, proposing the concept of *thermalscapes* to inform the relatively neglected role of temperatures in tourism research.

Each of these will be addressed as the paper first elaborates on the representational efforts embedded in the phenomenological tradition in tourism research. Secondly, it then clarifies the links between NRT and phenomenology to construct the conceptual framework for a multisensory phenomenology. Thirdly, in the spirit of the opening quote and of recent developments in embodied methodologies, the paper then provides an empirical exposition of interrail which animates representations by rendering a sense of place, and a poetics of movement, in a way which words alone would fail (see for example Latham & McCormack, 2009; Scarles, 2010; Vannini & Taggart, 2013). Similar to other attempts integrating data via hyperlinks in publications (Tribe, 2008) we recommend reading this paper in its electronic version, with an internet connection, in order to access some of the empirical material. Hyperlinked examples are followed by an audio symbol (🎧) or a video symbol (▶). To gain access to these, click on the underlined sentence (while holding down the ctrl button).

NRT, phenomenology and embodied methodologies in tourism research

Phenomenology has been widely used with the aim of exploring the meanings, understandings and textual interpretations constituting the phenomena under study (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010), thereby attempting to "reveal some enlightening...insights...through a systematic attempt to uncover and

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