

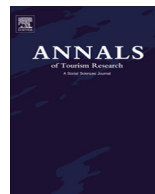


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# Journeys of inspiration: Working artists' reflections on tourism



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### ABSTRACT

While much recent research has been focused on aspects of creative tourism, relatively little has paid attention to the views of creative residents. In this paper we argue that romantically informed modes of travel are important to working artists. The findings, generated through qualitative research, suggest that many working artists adopt anti-tourist perspectives informed by romanticism and based upon temporal, spatial and behavioural touristic distinctions. The desire to 'not be a tourist' however becomes challenged by a desire for an integrated and inspirational engagement with the elsewhere developed from their educational experiences. This is demonstrated as a core aspect of the identities of working artists as creative residents in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK.

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## Introduction

It has recently been argued that there is a renewed interest in the relationships between creativity and tourism in tourism research—the so called 'creative turn' (Richards, 2011). The emergence of 'creative tourism' arguably reflects the growing integration between tourism and different place-making strategies, including promotion of the creative industries and indeed even 'creative cities'. Creative tourism has been viewed as an escape route from the serial reproduction of mass cultural tourism,

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offering more flexible and authentic experiences which can be co-created between hosts and guests (Richards, 2011). However these debates have tended to focus on those tourists visiting creative sites and have largely ignored the voices of the creative workers and creative residents—lifestyle entrepreneurs, intellectuals and artists—themselves. The relationship between artists specifically and tourism has also been examined by recent academic research as well as in many works of literature and visual art (Rakic & Lester, 2013; Thompson, Hannam, & Petrie, 2012; Tribe, 2008) but, again, rarely has much attention been paid to working artists' (broadly conceived as musicians, performance artists as well as visual artists) views of tourism (although see Bell, 2013). The focus on artists presented in this paper is important as it has been argued that artists and counter-culturalists have been instigators of practices that can eventually become, through processes of commodification and emulation more dominant popular practices (Markusen, 2006; Zukin, 2010).

Much previous work has thus examined the ways in which artists can be an attractive focus for tourism development (Aoyama, 2009; Currid, 2009; Du Cros & Jolliffe, 2011; Markusen, 2006; Richards, 2014). As Richards (2011) points out, the development of a particular cultural 'scene' can provide the substance of creativity, such as particular enclaves such as the artistic colonies that developed in France in the late nineteenth century (Herbert, 1996). Previously marginal areas for tourism have been gradually incorporated into mainstream tourism through processes of gentrification and art-led regeneration in many places (Pappalepore, Maitland, & Smith, 2014; Richards, 2011). Artists have also been frequently seen as the pioneers of urban regeneration and as Sharon Zukin (2010) has shown in the case of New York, artists are often the first to move into neglected neighbourhoods in search of cheaper 'avant-garde' spaces, thus kick-starting gentrification processes which may eventually lead to an upgrading of the area and the subsequent growth of tourism.

The views of artists presented in this paper thus need to be contextualised in terms of the role of artists and creative workers in the development of so called 'creative tourism'. Indeed, Richards (2014, p. 119) has recently argued that: "[c]reativity has become increasingly important for the development of tourism in cities in recent years. As competition between cities grows, they increasingly seek to distinguish themselves through creative strategies." However, he further notes that such strategies may be counter-productive as cities often end up adopting similar creative tourism development models. More mature creative tourism destinations such as Barcelona have now developed an approach in terms of fostering artistic links with other cities, offering artists opportunities to meet and collaborate with Barcelona-based colleagues (Richards, 2011). Artists have also been enrolled into the co-creation of places through street art, performances and also in the doing of hospitality through licensed and unlicensed accommodation networks such as 'AirBnB' and 'Couchsurfing' (Germann Molz and Paris, 2013).

While it has been argued that artists have been instigators of new touristic practices they can also be seen to hold on to many older Romanticised views of tourism. In what follows we argue that the working artists—creative residents in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK—that participated in our research showed clear anti-tourist attitudes based upon perceived social distinctions, they also de-differentiate between work and touristic practices in their search for inspiration, and this is maintained through an aesthetic-reflexive positionality. Below, we discuss the historical and theoretical relationships between artists, Romanticism and tourism before presenting the views of the working artists interviewed.

### **Artists, romanticism and tourism**

European romanticism in the early nineteenth century was central to the 'framing' of nature as a spiritual realm (Blanning, 2010), and the construction of the exotic and the Orient as signifiers of 'Other' cultures, free from the strictures of emergent bourgeois modernity (de Botton, 2002). Later, visual artists such as Delacroix and Gauguin, amongst many others, also contributed towards the construction of these dominant representations of the exotic and the Oriental (Mackenzie, 1995; Staszak, 2013), a theme that was also carried into twentieth century modern art in the guise of 'primitivism' (Costa, 1991; Guenther, 2003) and into later 'countercultural' ideals of Non-Western peoples as idealisations of the 'Pre-modern' (Heath & Potter, 2005).

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